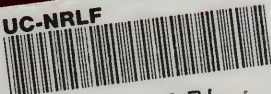
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THE EARL'S PROMISE

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THE RULING PASSION.
MY FIRST AND MY LAST LOVE.
CITY AND SUBURB.
ABOVE SUSPICION.
JOY AFTER SORROW.

Charlotte Eliza Lawson (Cowan) Riddell

THE EARL'S PROMISE.

A Novel.

BY

MRS. J. H. RIDDELL,

AUTHOR OF

'GEORGE GEITH,' 'TOO MUCH ALONE,' 'HOME, SWEET HOME,'

ETC.

A NEW EDITION.

LONDON:

HUTCHINSON & CO.,

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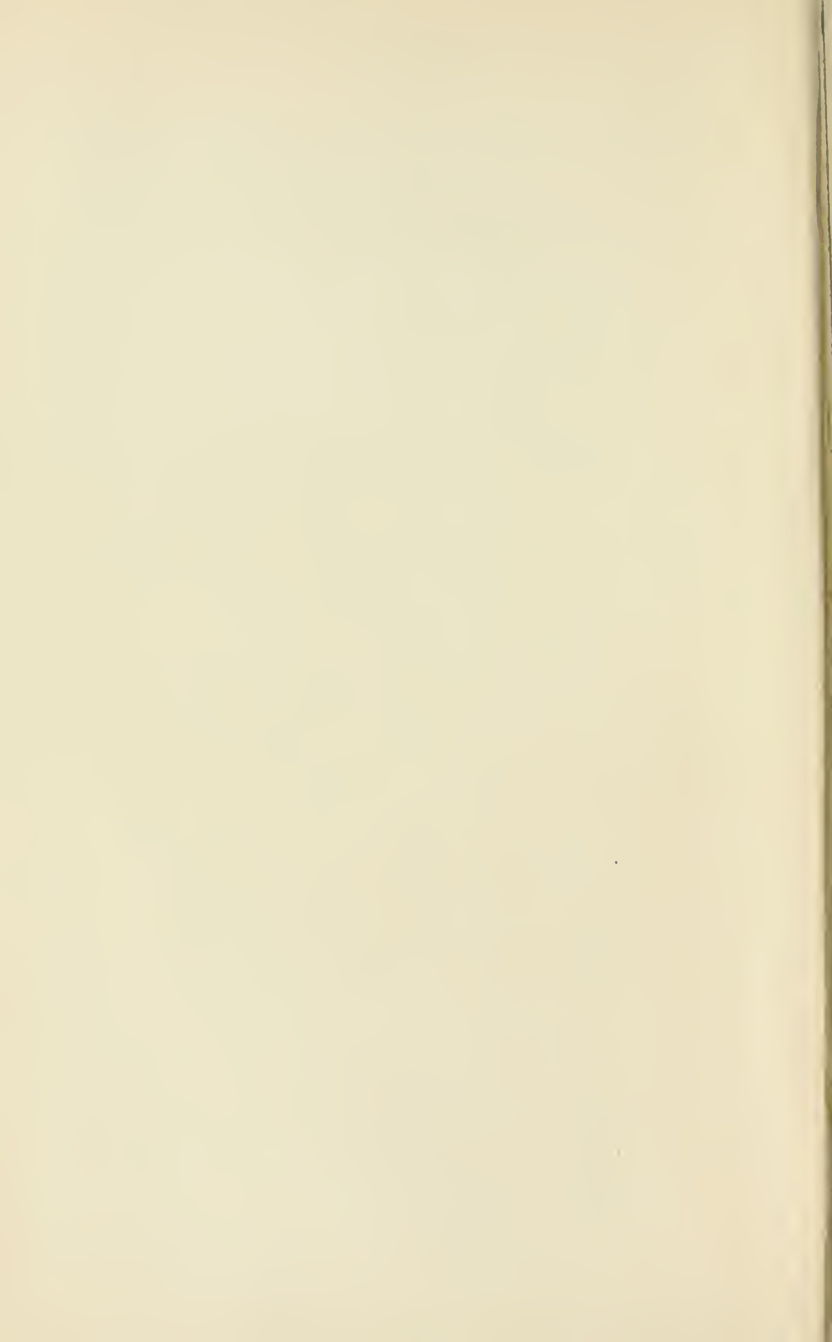

THE EARL'S PROMISE.

CHAPTER I.

KINGSLOUGH *née* BALLYLOUGH.

Kingslough at high noon was ordinarily the stupidest, dullest, dirtiest little town that could have been found in the Province of Ulster. On market and fair, and party-procession days, the inhabitants seemed to expend the whole of their strength. An almost unbroken calm ensued after wild excitement, a death-like stillness followed the shouts and cries of faction, the shrieks of drunken merriment, the shrill piping of fifes, the braying of trumpets, and the bang-banging of drums.

Excepting on such and such-like festive occasions as those above enumerated, the town, figuratively speaking, looked as though it had gone to bed to sleep off the effects of its last excitement or debauch.

In the bright sunlight it appeared like a place deserted by its population—a place rich in every natural beauty, which there was neither man nor woman to admire.

So far as position was concerned, Kingslough had nothing left to desire. Situated on an arm of the sea, the town, well sheltered from the wild north winds by hills and far-spreading plantations, nestled its houses snugly along the shore, while the blue waves rippled gently in over the red sandstone beach.

Nature had indeed done everything for the little watering-place, and man had, as is usually the case, done his best to spoil Nature's handiwork.

Seen from the sea Kingslough lay tranquil under its hills, the perfection of an artist's ideal; but a nearer view dispelled this allusion, and it appeared to eyes from which the glamour was removed, just what it has already been described, the stupidest, dullest, dirtiest little town in Ulster.

Here was no dark Moorish architecture, lighted up by the bright costumes and brighter eyes of the Galway women. Here were no fantastic houses, no picturesque surprises, no archways lying in deep shadow, no recessed and highly ornamented doorways, no rich carvings, no evidences of a wonderful and romantic past. Everything was straight, strictly utilitarian, mean. The best houses presented outwardly no sign of the amount of actual accommodation they contained.

They were old, but they had not grown grey and softened with the lapse of years. The prevailing "finish" amongst the better class of residences was paint or rough-cast, whilst the dwellings inhabited by the trading and working members of the community were periodically covered with lime-white, which the rain as regularly washed off.

The side-paths were uneven, the streets unlighted, every sanitary regulation either unborn or in the earliest and weakest stage of infancy. From a picturesque point of view the fishing-boats drawn up on the beach formed a pleasing foreground to a charming landscape, acceptable to the eye; but the neighbourhood of these boats was disagreeable to the nose by reason of cods' heads, and other fishy matters, that lay decomposing in the sun.

Time had been when Kingslough was known by a more distinctively Irish name, that of Ballylough, the A being pronounced very broad indeed, while a fine guttural sound was imparted to the "ough,"—as indeed is still the case with the terminal letters in Kingslough.

At that period, Ballylough was a very modest Bally indeed, and the lodgings it let in the boating season to strangers from Glenwellan were of the most primitive description.

The villa residences, the rows of terraces, the sea wall, the grand promenade overlooking the bay, all of which now delight the eyes of tourists and others, had not yet emerged from the then future that has long since become the past.

The occasion on which the tiny sea-port came to be re-christened, was that of the first gentleman in Europe succeeding to the British throne.

Mighty things were, by certain people and classes in Ireland, expected to result from that event.

His visit, when Prince of Wales, to the Isle of Saints had excited high hopes in the hearts of many of his Hibernian subjects.

The liberalism exhibited by the heir apparent would, they

felt satisfied, be brought into practice by the sovereign in remedying the wrongs of Ireland.

The Roman Catholics believed they should now have a friend and partisan in the highest places, able and willing to redress their grievances. The trading portion of the community, deceived by the fact of the honour or dishonour of knighthood having been conferred on a few Dublin shop-keepers, trusted the hour was at hand when commerce would be recognised as a power in Ireland; and that a good time was coming, when money made in mills and offices might be pleasantly spent in crushing the pride of those "aristocrats," who spite of their poverty persisted in holding a semblance of state on their unproductive acres, and extending such hospitality as their narrow means permitted, solely and exclusively to those they considered born by God's grace in the same rank of life as themselves.

As for the dissenters in the north,—that numerous and remarkable body to which successive monarchs and prime ministers have paid a curious amount of attention ever since the time of William the Third, who established that *raison d'être* of many a shabby, poorly attended place of worship, the Regium Donum—as for the dissenters they cherished a vague idea that, although his Most Gracious Majesty George IV. might be styled "Defender of the Faith," which was not in some respects exactly their faith, still the light of his glorious countenance would not impossibly be lent to them for the purpose of placing those who worshipped in meeting-houses and other conventicles on a par, socially and pecuniarily, with their old enemy the Church as by law established. The labouring classes commonly cherished a conviction that an immediate rise of wages must follow the coronation; in fact, amongst those of the Irish who wanted and hoped for anything, there was a noisy and expectant accession of loyalty; and as a small evidence of this, the municipal rulers of Ballylough convened a meeting, at which with the almost unanimous consent of the inhabitants it was decided that for the future—

"The important sea-port town of Ballylough, possessed of an almost natural harbour, situated on the direct route to America, in the centre of a supply of herrings practically speaking limitless, boasting a beach unrivalled in the three kingdoms, and which presented facilities for bathing unsurpassed by any other watering-place, having likewise in

its immediate neighbourhood manufactories of no mean extent" and so forth, should for the future be known to those whom it might, and those whom it might not concern, as Kingslough.

In liberal and democratic matters the rulers over the town were strong. Amongst others of less note may be enumerated a woollen-draper who in the course of a long and laborious life had made much money, and what was more to the purpose, kept it when made; a certain sea-captain called Mullins, reputed to be worth nine thousand pounds, every sixpence of which he had made by smuggling; an apothecary; a Mr. Connor, who resided a little way out of the town, and who, possessing an income of one hundred and thirty pounds a year, did nothing, as his fathers had done before him.

These men, being ardent lovers of their country, its traditions, Brian Baroihme, the Irish melodies ("Boyne Water" and "Protestant Boys" excepted), illicit spirits, and the Old Parliament House on Stephen's Green, were, as might have been expected, uproarious with delight when this graceful tribute to the virtues of their new monarch had been offered.

From the demonstration, however, all those who belonged to the powerful though comparatively small Tory party held resolutely aloof.

They could generally, not always by ways and influence that would have borne the light, materially assist in sending one member for the county at least to the House of Commons, but in local and municipal matters they were impotent.

Ballylough was owned by the Earl of Glendare who to the disgust of Lord Ardmorne, his relentless political opponent, chanced to be ground-landlord of almost every house and public building the town contained.

For centuries the Glendares had been connected with that part of the country. All those members of the family who died in any place reasonably accessible to Ireland were carried up a very steep hill overlooking Ballylough, where among the ruins of Ballyknock Abbey the curious stranger could obtain an exquisite view over land and sea, and behold at the same time sheep nibbling the short sweet mountain herbage beside the family vault which contained all that death had left of youth and beauty—of rank, wealth, and earthly consideration.

It was a mighty strange contrast to meet Lady Glendare in her grand coach, a very Jezebel made up of pride, paint, deceit, extravagance and heartlessness, and then to toil up to that burying-place lying lonely among the desolate hills, and think of those women—once haughty and sinful, just like her, in life knowing no rest, making no happiness—who lay there mouldering into dust.

At the time of George the Fourth's accession to the throne, Charles, the eighth Earl, had not long succeeded to the title and estates of his father, and so far from objecting to Ballylough being changed into Kingslough gave the project his warmest support, being moved thereto by the reasons following.

First, because he trusted his eldest son, no longer a young man, would sooner or later hold an appointment about the Court of the new monarch; secondly, because a builder, who proposed the wild speculation of erecting a terrace of houses, and was willing to pay a handsome sum down for a lease of nine hundred and ninety-nine years, signified his belief that houses, and land intended as sites for houses, would let better if the place were, as he expressed himself, "given a fresh start;" and thirdly, because he knew the change would annoy Lord Ardmorne.

So the name was altered, and the town, after a sleepy, inconsequent sort of fashion, grew and prospered; so that by the time this story commences, it had established for itself the name of a highly respectable, not to say aristocratic, watering-place.

Travelling then was not what it is now. People did not go whisking about like comets; a journey was attended with many discomforts; the nearer home anxious mothers could obtain sea-bathing for their darlings, and change of air and scene for themselves, the better they were pleased; and accordingly, in the season, Kingslough was crammed from parlour to attic, and even ladies who, having seen better days, spoke much about their papas and mammas, and a radiant past which had once been theirs, did not disdain to let lodgings, or it might be to accept invitations during the summer months from various relations and friends, so as to leave their houses and furniture free for the use of Mr. and Mrs., or Sir and my Lady, at so much per month.

But even in the season it was not a lively place. People

went there to bathe, not to form acquaintances. Let Mrs. Murtock, wife of Murtock, the great distiller, don what gorgeous array she pleased, not even a glance could she win from one of the upper ten as they sat in church trying to look blandly unconscious of her existence.

People made no experiments in acquaintanceship at Kingslough. The world, according to the then social gospel extant, meant the old stock and the new; and whenever the new held out the right hand of fellowship to the old, it got, metaphorically speaking, so cruelly slapped, that the experiment was rarely repeated.

Not a dweller in the Faubourg St. Germain was in reality one whit more bitterly proud than these Irish ladies, so charming in their manners to high and low, to those on the same rung of the social ladder as themselves, and those at the foot of it; but who refused to recognize even the existence of "such people" as the wives and daughters of men that could, to use the expression which frequently fell from their lips, have "bought and sold" the lands and goods and chattels of the old stock without a misgiving as to where the money was to come from to compass so laudable a purpose.

Altogether, unless a human being was excessively fond of his own society and natural scenery, Kingslough could not have been accounted a desirable place in which to settle for life.

Its aboriginal inhabitants—those, that is to say, who resided there all the year round, were principally a well-developed race of marvellously healthy, dirty, poor, ragged, happy children, shoeless and stockingless as regarded their legs and feet, soapless and combless as concerned their heads and faces.

From early morning till late at night these picturesque urchins held high revel in the gutters and along the side-paths of the poorer streets; scores of them disported themselves along the beach, wading out into the sea as far as their clothing—scanty enough, Heaven knows—would allow them, and when the sea, or tide as they called it, was out too far to be waded into, they pursued the entrancing amusement of hunting for crabs and periwinkles on the sands.

At intervals, shrill cries from some woman, got up in the costume of her class—a large white cap, with immense goiffured frills on her head, and a very small plaid shawl

over her shoulders—shrieking for the return of her offspring, interrupted the pastimes indulged in by youth at Kingslough.

Occasionally these cries from the parents were succeeded by bitter lamentations from the children, who were not unfrequently hurried back to the duties and realities of life by slaps, and threats of more serious punishment.

Towards evening, young men and old men, who, following fishing as a profession, spent a considerable portion of the day in bed, appeared upon the scene. Stalwart weather-beaten men, attired in pilot-coats and sou-westers, they made their way to the shore, where great tub-like smacks lay waiting their coming.

These fishers were brave and patient; kind, tender husbands to wives, who soon lost their good looks in that hard northern climate, and grew prematurely wrinkled and aged with the battle of life ; good sons to widowed mothers or aged fathers ; faithful lovers to girls who boasted exquisite complexions, tall, erect figures, and a wealth of beautiful hair rarely to be seen amongst their Saxon sisters; a grand, sturdy, hard-working race, who feared God exceedingly, and went out in the wild, dark winter nights to war with the winds and the waves as undauntedly as though each season did not leave some maid, or wife, or mother desolate.

Next to the fishermen came the shopkeeper class, who differed from each other as stars vary in magnitude, from Widow McCann, who set out her cottage-window with sweets, and cakes, and apples for the children, and who sold besides, halfpennyworths of everything that could possibly be subdivided into that value, to Mr. Neill, proprietor of *the* shop of the town, a place where everything, from an ounce of tea to canvas for sails, from a boy's kite to a plough, could be procured at a moment's notice.

Mr. Neill at one time entertained ideas of making his way into drawing-rooms where only the élite of Kingslough society was to be found ; but his pretensions being firmly and, truth to say, not over courteously repudiated, he afterwards revenged himself by buying from the Encumbered Estates Commissioners a great property in Munster, where, though it was darkly rumoured that he once stood behind a counter, impecunious gentry—*real* gentry as the poorer class call them—made friends with his sons and daughters, hoping that the marriage of blood with money might yet save the rushy acres they lacked capital and energy to drain.

Time has done wonders in Ireland. It has taught the "old stock" that if they want money, and unhappily they cannot do without it, they must tolerate the people who have been able to make money.

But they do not like those persons yet, except as a means to an end; and possibly the faculty of adding sovereign to sovereign and acre to acre is not exactly that calculated to render a man socially popular anywhere.

The Kingslough upper ten held that opinion at any rate. They longed for Dives' possessions, but Dives himself they would have consigned to a deeper hell than that mentioned in the parable, had their theology contained it.

Above the shopkeepers ranked the manufacturers, men who attended closely to their business, associated freely amongst themselves, and on the occasion of public dinners, meetings, and the like, were shaken by the hand by Lord Glendare, Lord Ardmorne, and the remainder of the élite of Kingslough.

They did not presume on these privileges. Residing out of the town, they came little in contact with its inhabitants, and were content with such civilities as the worthies of Kingslough thought fit to accord.

If they could afford to keep good horses, their sons followed the hounds; and they generally were able to give dowries to their daughters, when in due course of time they married men who likewise were connected with manufacture, either far off or near at hand.

They were select people, keeping themselves to themselves, marrying and intermarrying amongst their own class, neither meddling nor intermeddling with the affairs of their neighbours.

They gave employment and they paid good wages, and took care that neither their smoke nor their refuse caused offence to Kingslough.

The town might claim them, but they did not claim the town. If they interfered in politics, and had strong opinions about the return of members for the county, it was but human and Irish. As a rule they were quiet enough, harmless as doves, busy with their own gathering and storing of honey as bees.

Higher than the manufacturers, who? Old maids and poodles. The Court Circle at Kingslough was composed almost entirely of ladies who wore fronts, and fat, snapping

wretches of dogs who had too much hair of their own. The men belonging to these women were dead, or serving the king in India, or captains on board men-of-war, or constabulary officers in remote parts of Ireland, or barristers in Dublin, or even it might be solicitors in the same city, who had a large connection amongst the landed gentry and were learned in the mysteries of conveyancing.

These men did not often visits Kingslough, but on the rare occasions of their coming, the sensation produced by their presence was profound.

Kingslough rubbed its eyes, so to say, and woke up, and the opinions and facts then brought from the great and wicked world to that garden of Eden where so many elderly Eves congregated, furnished conversation for years afterwards.

In addition to the inhabitants already enumerated, Kingslough reckoned amongst its gentry a clergyman, whose cure was four miles distant; a curate, on whose shoulders devolved the spiritual responsibilities of a rector, who was continually absent from his flock; a colonel, who had never been in active service, but who, on the strength of his rank in the army, was so fortunate as to marry an English lady possessed of a comfortable fortune; a priest, the soul of good company; a remarkably acute attorney, Lord Ardmorne's agent; the police officer, and, may I add, the doctor?

Hardly. He attended all the population, gentle and simple, and was popular alike amongst high and low. He knew the secrets of most households, was personally acquainted with the history and appearance of those skeletons that do somehow contrive to get locked up in the cupboards of even the best regulated families; but he had sprung from the bourgeois class, he had relatives very low down in the worldly scale, he had friends whose existence and status could not be overlooked by old maids and old women of the other sex, and therefore, and for all these reasons he was socially only tolerated by his best patients.

Curious stories he could have told concerning some of them—stories comprising the honour of many an ancient house, but his name had never been tarnished by any indiscreet confidence.

Even to the wife of his bosom, a woman of an inquiring, not to say inquisitive turn of mind, who had as many wiles

as a poacher, and changed her tactics as often as a fox, he presented an invulnerable front of lamb-like innocence.

Trusting her ostensibly with everything in and out of his professional experience, he kept her in a state of actual ignorance, worthy of admiration in these latter days.

The moment he started on his rounds in the morning, she started on hers—telling this, that, and the other as the most profound secret to each one of her acquaintances, who laughed at her when once she left the house—for had they not heard all she was able to communicate, and more, hours previously, from Molly the fish-wife, or Pat O'Donnel, one of the privileged beggars and newsmongers of the town?

So ends the list. If tedious, it has been necessary to indicate the history of Kingslough and glance at the élite of Kingslough society in order to save stoppages by the way hereafter.

After this needful digression, let us revert to the first sentence in this story once again, and enter the stupid, dull, dirty little town of Kingslough at noon.

CHAPTER II.

WHERE CAN SHE BE?

Something had on that particular day, at that special hour occurred to disturb the customary serenity of Kingslough. Spite of the sun which flared upon the terrace, blinds were drawn up and heads thrust out.

People stood in knots upon the Glendare Parade talking eagerly together, and looking down into the sea. At the doors of the houses in Main Street servants occupied the door-steps and gaped vaguely to right and left as though expecting the coming of some strange spectacle.

In the middle of the horse-ways poodles, unexpectedly released from durance in stuffy parlours, yelped at other poodles, and fought and ran or were carried away. The young ladies who attended as day-boarders that select establishment presided over by the Misses Chesterfield having been accorded a half-holiday, came walking through the town to their respective homes, thereby adding to the tumult. Thundering double knocks resounded momentarily

at the door of an insignificant-looking three-storey house on the parade, in the lower room of which a very old lady, feeble though voluble, sat wringing her hand, bemoaning her fate, and appealing in turn to each of her visitors to "do something."

"They are turning the water out of Hay's mill-pond, and all the fishermen are down on the shore, and Colonel Perris has taken his groom and gardener to the Black-stream, and oh! my dear friend, let us try to hope for the best," said Mrs. Lefroy, one of the annual visitors to Kingslough, acting with a wonderful naturalness the part of Job's comforter to the decrepit, broken woman she addressed.

"You may be quite sure, dear Miss Riley, that everybody is doing their best," added Mrs. Mynton kindly, if ungrammatically.

"And whatever may have happened," broke in the clergyman who did not reside in his parish, and never visited it save on Sunday mornings, "whatever may have happened I need not remind so thorough a Christian that——"

"How can you be so silly as to frighten the poor old lady in this absurd manner," said a deep stern female voice at this juncture; "the girl will come back safe and sound, never fear. Girls do not get murdered, or drowned, or kidnapped so easily at this age of the world; she will return about dinner-time, if not before, mark my words." And the speaker a hard-featured woman of more than middle age, who possessed a kindly eye as well as decided manners, looked round the persons assembled as she finished, as though to inquire "Who is there amongst you that shall dare contradict me?"

For a moment there was silence, and then uprose a confused murmur of many voices—amongst which one sounded shrill above the rest.

"If ye think ye are in England still, Mrs. Hartley—" commenced the owner of that cracked treble in a brogue which made one at least of her auditors shiver.

"Pardon me, Miss Tracey, I never indulge in day-dreams," interposed Mrs. Hartley, rustling across the room in one of those stiff black silks, which were at once the envy and the condemnation of feminine Kingsclough, "but whether people are in England or Ireland, I consider it very foolish to meet trouble half way. Particularly in this case, where I hope and believe the trouble is all imaginary."

"Ah! and indeed we hope that too, every one of us," said

Mrs. Mynton, who was regarded in Kingsclough as a sort of peace-making chorus.

"Perhaps *you* know where Nettie is, Mrs. Hartley," suggested Mrs. Lefroy, who on the score of her husband's name claimed a relationship with various distinguished members of the bar which it would have puzzled the king-at-arms to trace, and adopted in consequence a severe and judicial deportment amongst her acquaintances.

"I know no more of Miss O'Hara's movements than you do, perhaps rather less," replied the lady addressed, "but until I am positively assured some accident has happened to her, I prefer to believe that, finding she was too late for school, she took a holiday, and has walked up to the Abbey to sketch, or gone to see some of her young friends, who may perhaps have induced her to spend the remainder of the day in forgetfulness of backboards and Cramer's exercises."

"Ah! you don't know Nettie."

"Indeed, you don't know Nettie."

"You know nothing at all about Nettie," broke forth Miss Riley's visitors, whilst Miss Riley herself, shaking her poor old head, mumbled out from jaws that were almost toothless, "Nettie would not do such a thing, not for the world."

For a moment Mrs. Hartley remained silent, but she was a person who did not like to be beaten or to seem beaten, and accordingly, with a sudden rally of her forces, she inquired,—

"Had the girl any lover ?"

Now this was in reality the question which every woman in the room had been dying to put ; and yet so unquestioned was Miss Riley's respectability of position and propriety of demeanour during seventy years or thereabouts of maidenhood, that no one impressed by the Hibernian unities had ventured to put it. Mrs. Hartley was however a "foreigner," and audacious. "Had the girl a lover ?" she asked, and at the mere suggestion of such a possibility, the curls in Miss Riley's brown front began slowly to slip from their tortoiseshell moorings, whilst her wrinkled old cheeks became suffused with a pale pink glow, just as though she were eighteen again, young enough to be wooed, and won, and wed.

"I am astonished at such an idea entering into the mind of *any* one who ever beheld my grand-niece," she remarked, the very bows in her cap trembling with indignation and palsy. "Nettie is only sixteen—a mere child——"

("With a very pretty face," remarked Mrs. Hartley, *inter alia.*)

"Who has never, so far as I know," went on the octogenarian, spoken half-a-dozen words to a—a—gentleman since she was ten years old."

"And pray, my dear Miss Riley, how far do you know about it?" retorted that irrepressible Englishwoman. "How can you, who never stir out of your house except for an hour in the sun, tell how many half-a-dozen words a young girl may have spoken to a young man. Have you asked that delightful Jane of yours if she ever suspected a love affair?"

"You can have in Jane, if you like," said Miss Riley. "If anything of that sort had been going on, Mrs. Hartley, Jane was too old and faithful a servant to have kept it from me."

"I wish we were all as sure Nettie has met with no accident, as we are that she has always behaved, and always will behave, like the good little girl we knew her to be," remarked Mrs. Mynton.

"It is natural, though," began Miss Tracey, "that seeing Mrs. Hartley is an Englishwoman, she——"

"Nonsense," interposed the lady, thus disparagingly referred to. "No one can think more highly of Nettie than I; indeed if I had a fault to find with her manners, it was only that they were too sedate and quiet for such a young creature —such a very pretty young creature," added Mrs. Hartley reflectively.

"It is very hard upon me at my time of life," said Miss Riley with a helpless whimper, and the irrelevancy of incipient dotage.

"Indeed it is; indeed we all feel that, but you must hope for the best. We shall see Nettie come back yet safe and sound." Thus the chorus, while Mrs. Hartley walked to the window and looked out upon the sea, a puzzled expression lurking in her brown eyes, and an almost contemptuous smile lingering about her mouth.

"Can you not throw any further light on this matter, Grace," she asked at last, turning towards a young girl who sat silent in one corner of the room.

"I never saw Nettie after she left our gate at nine o'clock this morning," was the reply accompanied by a vivid blush. "I wanted her to come in, but she said she was in a hurry; that she wished to get to school early, so as to speak to

Miss Emily about a French exercise she did not quite understand."

"And when you reached Kingslough House she had not arrived?"

"No, ma'am."

"I believe Miss Moffat has already told us all she knows on the subject," interposed a lady who had not hitherto entered into the conversation.

"I believe Miss Moffat knows more than she chooses to tell," retorted Mrs. Hartley, with a brusqueness which caused the eyes of every person to turn towards the girl, who in a perfect agony of confusion exclaimed——"

"Oh! Mrs. Hartley, I have not the remotest idea where Nettie is. I am quite positive she had not another thought in her mind when she left me, but to go straight to Kingslough House."

"The first remark you made when you heard she had not reached school was, that some accident must have happened to her."

"Allow me to correct you, Mrs. Hartley," said Miss Chesterfield. "Miss Moffat's words were, 'something must have happened,' meaning, as I understood, that something must have happened to prevent her attending as usual to her duties; that was what you intended to imply, my dear," added the lady, addressing her pupil, "is it not so?"

"Yes, that was what I intended to say," the girl eagerly agreed.

"And when the man brought in her scarf, which he saw floating on the pond, you thought she must have met with an accident?"

"Please, Miss Hartley, do not ask me any more," pleaded the witness. "We are making Miss Riley wretched. I cannot tell what to think. Very likely her scarf blew off as she crossed the plank. It was not in the least degree slippery this morning. I went that way myself. Besides the water there is not deep enough to drown any person."

A long sentence for a young lady of that day to utter in public. The gift of tongues had not then been so freely vouchsafed to damsels under twenty, as it has in these later times. And after listening to Miss Grace's little speech, Mrs. Hartley turned once more towards the window, and looked again over the sea.

With a different expression, however, to that her face had

worn previously. She looked anxious and troubled. Nettie O'Hara's beauty was too pleasant a remembrance for this middle-aged lady to be able to contemplate without dismay the possibility of harm having come to her. And that harm had come to her she began to fear, not in the way suggested by the Job's comforters who surrounded Miss Riley, but in a manner which might make the dripping corpse and long fair hair rendered unlovely by clinging sand, a welcome and happy memory by comparison.

No visitor who entered Miss Riley's house that day, had been so much inclined to pooh-pooh the alarm excited by the girl's disappearance as that remarkably sensible and matter-of-fact English lady, who now stood silently looking out over the sea; but as that sweet young face, innocent and guileless, and yet not quite happy, rose up before the eyes of her memory, she felt as though she should like to go forth and assist herself in the search foolish, kindly, incompetent, well-meaning friends and acquaintances were making for the girl.

While she stood there she heard vaguely as one hears the sound of running water, the stream of consolation and condolence flow on. They were good people all, those friends of the poor palsied lady, who with shaking head and trembling hands sat listening to their reiterated assurances that she need not be uneasy, there would be good news of Nettie soon; but not a competent counsellor could be reckoned amongst them. That at least was Mrs. Hartley's opinion when she turned and surveyed the group, and her opinion took the form of words in this wise:—

"If you hear nothing of Nettie before the post goes out to-night, Miss Riley, I should advise you to write and ask your nephew, the General, to come and see you without delay. I hope and trust, however, there may be no necessity for you to write. I shall send this evening to know if your anxiety is at an end."

And so saying, Mrs. Hartley took the old lady's hand, and held it for a moment sympathizingly; then with a general curtsey and good morning to an assemblage so large as to render a more friendly leave-taking well-nigh impossible, she passed from the room, her silk dress rustling as she went.

"That delightful Jane," as Mrs. Hartley called her, was in waiting to let the visitor out. She was a woman of thirty

or thereabouts, ruddy complexioned, and of a comely countenance. She was arrayed in decent black. Some one or other of the Riley family was always dying, and her mistress liked to see Jane in black, though the mistress could not well have afforded to provide mourning for the maid.

Mourning was tidy and respectable, further it enabled Jane to wear out Miss Riley's tardily laid aside sable garments; but a better dressed servant could not have been found in Kingslough than Jane M'Bride, who now stood apron at her eye ready to open the door for Mrs. Hartley.

"My good Jane," said that lady, pausing, "what do you think of all this?"

"If anything has happened to Miss Nettie, it will break the mistress's heart altogether," answered the servant.

"But what can have happened?" asked Mrs. Hartley.

"Nothin' plaze God," replied Jane, with that ready invocation of the sacred name, which is an Hibernian peculiarity, and yet apparently with a secret misgiving, that her own views and those of Providence might on the special occasion in question have chanced to be at variance.

"Jane," said Mrs. Hartley, unmoved by the solemnity of the adjuration—perhaps because she was too much accustomed to hear it used—"has it occurred to you that Miss Nettie might have gone off with a—lover?"

"No, ma'am; oh! presarve us all, no; Miss Nettie had no lover, nor thought of one."

"You are quite certain of that? I speak to you as a friend of the family."

"Certain sure; it is as sure as death, Miss Nettie had no lover."

"Then as sure as death, if Miss Nettie had not a lover, she will be back here before the sun sets," and adown the parade sailed Mrs. Hartley, all her silken flags and streamers flying in the light summer breeze.

Before, however, she reached Glendare Terrace, came a soft voice in her ear, and a light touch on her arm.

"May I walk with you, Mrs. Hartley?" said the voice.

"I want to confide in you," said the touch.

"You here, Grace?" exclaimed Mrs. Hartley stopping and looking her young companion straight in the face. "Most decidedly you may walk with me, you know I am always glad of your company."

And then they went on in silence. "Surely she will ask

me some question," thought Grace. "I will give my lady line enough," decided the older woman—and the latter won.

"I have so wanted to speak to you, dear Mrs. Hartley," said the girl, after they had paced along a few minutes in silence.

"I like to hear you speak, Grace," was the calm reply.

"But about Nettie——"

"I understood you to say, my love, that you had told us all there was to tell."

"And so I have—told all I have to tell, but surely, surely—you know—that is—I mean—dear Mrs. Hartley," and the timid hand clasped the widow's well-developed arm more tightly, "I may trust you implicitly, may I not?"

There was a second's pause, then Mrs. Hartley said,—

"I hope you may trust me, Grace."

"I have told all I know about Nettie," went on the girl vehemently, "but not all I suspect. Oh! Mrs. Hartley, when I heard you advise Miss Riley to send for the General, I could have *blessed* you. If ever Nettie comes back, you must never tell, never, what I am saying to you now. Nettie was miserable and discontented, and—and wicked. She used to wish she was dead. Oh! how she used to cry at the prospect of being a governess for life; and it *was* hard, was it not, poor dear? I cannot bear to think about it. She seemed good and kind to Miss Riley, but she was not a bit grateful, really. Papa never liked Nettie. I did, and I like her still, but somehow, try her as one would, soft and sweet as she appeared, one always seemed to be getting one's teeth on a stone. I am afraid you will think me dreadfully unkind, but I *must* talk to somebody, and, may I please, talk to you?"

"Certainly, Grace, if you will make yourself intelligible," was the reply; "but I want to understand. Not fifteen minutes since you said you were certain that when Nettie parted company with you, she had, to use your own expression, which, if you were my child, I should beg of you never to use again, 'not another thought in her mind but to go straight to Kingslough House.'"

"If I talked English, like you," retorted Grace, "everybody in Ireland would laugh at me."

"Do you talk Irish, then?" asked Mrs. Hartley.

"You know what I mean," was the answer, and once again Mrs. Hartley felt the soft hand clasping her arm.

"My love, I do know what your Irish-English means, but not in the slightest degree do I comprehend your mystery. Do you believe Nettie has committed suicide?"

"Suicide!" with a shiver, "why should she?"

"Do you believe she is drowned?"

"No! oh, no!"

"Will she return to the Parade to-night?"

"I hope she may. How can I tell?"

At this juncture Mrs. Hartley freed her arm from Miss Moffat's grasp.

"My dear child," she said, "you had better go home to your father. He is a man of mature years, and may like to be fooled. I am a woman of mature years, and the bare suspicion of being fooled is intolerable to me—good-bye."

Then Miss Moffat suddenly brought to book, exclaimed,—

"I have no mother, Mrs. Hartley, and my father never liked Nettie, and I liked her so—so much."

"And therefore you know what has become of her—where she has gone?"—a sentence severely uttered as an interrogative.

"No! I wish I did—I wish I did."

"What do you suspect? you may be quite frank, Grace, with me."

"She had a locket she wore inside her dress, a ring she put on sometimes and said belonged to her grandfather; but it was quite a new ring, and the hair in the locket was black as jet. The locket fell out of her dress one day, and she invented in her confusion two or three stories about it. If she had only told me—if she had only said one word—Nettie, Nettie," wailed the girl, extinguishing with that cry the last ray of hope Mrs. Hartley's horizon had contained.

"Grace," began that lady, after a long and painful pause, "you reminded me a little time since that you have no mother. May I talk to you like one?"

"Dear Mrs. Hartley, yes! what have I done wrong?" and Grace's hand stole back to its accustomed place, and for once Mrs. Hartley thought her companion's accent more than pretty, something which might even have attracted admirers at "the West End."

"Nothing, I hope; I trust you never will; but does your great interest in Nettie O'Hara arise from the fact that you and John Riley are likely to be much hereafter one to another?"

Instantly the hand was withdrawn, and a quick flush passed over the girl's face.

"John and I are nothing to each other but very good friends. He does not care enough for me, and I do not care enough for him, for things to be different. I only wish Nettie and he could have liked each other, and made a match. Perhaps in time she would have grown good enough for him."

"You think John Riley a very good man, then?"

"Yes, too good and rare——" began the girl, when her companion interrupted her with—

"You little simpleton, run home, and to-night when you say your prayers, entreat that if you ever marry, you may have just such a good and rare (though foolish and capable of improvement) husband as John Riley. In all human probability you will never be anything more to each other than you are now; but still keep him as a friend, and you shall have me too, Grace, if you care for an old woman's liking."

"Though I am not pretty like Nettie," added the girl.

"You are pretty, though not like Nettie. Ah! child, when you are my age you will understand why we, for whom admiration, if we ever had the power to attract it, is a forgotten story, are so tender to girls. Oh! I wish I had that fair-haired Nettie beside me now. How shall I sleep if no tidings come of her to-night?"

"Surely there will," said Grace softly.

"Surely there will not," considered Mrs. Hartley; and so the pair parted, Miss Moffat with the hope that although Nettie might have "gone off" with somebody she would repent by the way and turn back, Mrs. Hartley wondering who in the world that "somebody" might be with whom the young lady had chosen to elope.

Could it be Mr. John Riley; that same John to whom Grace Moffat had, by popular consent, been long assigned. Grace was young, but young people grow older in a judicious course of years. John likewise had not yet that head on his shoulders which is popularly supposed to bestow wisdom on its possessor; but he was an honest, honourable, good-looking, sufficiently clever young man, and as both families approved of the suggested alliance (had done so indeed since Grace wore a coral and bells), Kingslough considered the marriage as well-nigh *un fait accompli*.

True, Grace had been known to declare "she never meant

to leave her father, that she did not think much of love or lovers, of marrying or giving in marriage. Why could not girls let well alone, and when they were happy at home, stay there? She was happy; she would always remain at Bayview; she was well; she did wish people would leave her alone." Thus Grace, whilst John, when gracefully rallied on the subject by acquaintances who never could be made to understand that if a man has lost his heart, he does not care to talk about the fact, was wont laughingly to quote the Scotch ballad, and say, "'Gracie is ower young to marry yet,' and when she is old enough it is not likely she would throw herself away upon a poor fellow like me."

For Grace had a large fortune in her own right, and expectations worthy of consideration, and she came of a good old family, and persons who were supposed to understand such matters declared that eventually Grace would be a very attractive woman.

But then that time was the paradise of girls; they held the place in masculine estimation now unhappily monopolized by more mature sirens, and if a girl failed in her early teens to develop beauty after the fashion of Nettie O'Hara, her chances in the matrimonial market were not considered promising.

Curls, book-muslin, blue eyes, sashes to match, blushes when spoken to, no original or common-place observations to advance when invited out to the mild dissipation of tea, and a carpet-dance; such was the raw material from which men of that generation chose wives for themselves, mothers for their children.

It was the fashion of the day, and we are all aware that fashions are not immutable.

Such is not the fashion now; and yet who, looking around, shall dare to say that the old curl and crook and shepherdess business had not, in spite of its folly, much to recommend it?

Men made mistakes then no doubt, but they were surely less costly mistakes than are made nowadays. If a husband take to wife the wrong woman—and this is an error which has not even the charm of novelty to recommend it—he had surely a better chance for happiness with natural hair, virgin white dresses made after simplicity's own device, innocent blue eyes, and cheeks whose roses bloomed at a moment's

notice, than with the powders, paints, and frizettes of our own enchanting maidens.

We are concerned now, however, with the girl of *that* period. According to the then standard of beauty, as by society established, Grace Moffat was not lovely. With Nettie O'Hara the case stood widely different.

Had her portrait ever been painted, it might now have been exhibited as the type of that in woman which took men's hearts captive in those old world days; golden hair hanging in thick curls almost to her waist; large blue eyes, with iris that dilated till at times it made the pupil seem nearly black; long, tender lashes; a broad white forehead; a complexion pure pink, pure white; dimpled cheeks; soft tender throat; slight figure, undeveloped; brains undeveloped also; temper, perhaps, ditto.

A face without a line; eyes without even a passing cloud; an expression perfectly free from shadow; and yet Grace Moffat described her favourite companion accurately, when in vague language she likened her to some fair tempting fruit, inside whereof there lurked a hardness which friend, relative, and acquaintance, tried in vain to overcome. It had been the custom at Kingslough to regard Nettie as a limpid brook, through the clean waters of which every pebble, every grain of sand was to be plainly discerned. Now as Mrs. Hartley sat and pondered over the girl's mysterious disappearance, she marvelled whether Miss Nettie's innocent transparency might not rather have been that of a mirror; in other words, while showing nothing much of her own thoughts, the young lady merely reflected back those of others.

She had been unhappy, yet who save Grace was cognizant of the fact? The outside world always imagined she was interested and absorbed in those studies, which were to fit her to fill a responsible position—perhaps eventually at a salary of eighty pounds a year; such things were amongst the chronicles of society—in that state of life in which strangely enough Providence had seen fit to place an O'Hara. And yet what was the truth? the position had been unendurable to her, and most probably the studies likewise.

"Oh!" sighed Mrs. Hartley, sinking into the depths of a comfortable easy-chair, "is truth to be found nowhere save at the bottom of a well? and has John Riley anything to do with Nettie's disappearance? If I find he has, I shall renounce humanity."

Nevertheless, how was she to retain her faith intact even in John Riley? Not for one moment did she now imagine that if Nettie were actually gone, and she believed this to be the case, she had gone alone. No relative, Mrs. Hartley well knew, would welcome this prodigal with tears of rejoicing—with outstretched arms of love. She had been slow to share in the alarm caused by Nettie's disappearance, by Nettie's saturated scarf; now she could not resist a gradually increasing conviction that the girl's conduct had belied her face, and brought discredit on her family; that she had stolen away with some one who, fancying the match would not be approved of by his own relatives, possessed power enough over her affections to induce her to consent to a secret marriage.

A deeper depth of misfortune than a runaway match Mrs. Hartley had indeed for a moment contemplated as whilst the talk in Miss Riley's parlour ran on, her eyes looked over the sun-lit sea; but seated in her own pleasant drawing-room, her reason refused to let her fears venture again to the brink of so terrible an abyss. No; Nettie had always been surrounded by honest and honourable men and women; women, who though they might be at times malicious, fond of scandal, given to tattling concerning the offences of their neighbours, would yet have done their best to keep a girl from wrong, or the knowledge of wrong; men, who let their sins of omission and commission be in other respects what they would, had yet a high standard of morality, as morality concerned their wives, mothers, sisters, children, and female relatives generally.

Had Nettie been one of the royal family, fenced round by all sorts of forms and ceremonies, by state etiquette, and the traditions of a line of kings, she could not, in Mrs. Hartley's opinion, have breathed an atmosphere more free from taint of evil, than that in which she had hitherto lived and had her being.

It might be John Riley—incited thereto by love of her pretty face, and fear of opposition from his family—had persuaded the girl to run off with him. If this were so, the greater pity for both. He was poor and struggling; her worldly fortune consisted of those personal charms already duly chronicled, a very little learning, and a smattering of a few accomplishments.

She knew as much as other young ladies of her age of

that period; but after all, "La Clochette," the "Battle of Prague," and other such triumphs of musical execution were not serviceable articles with which to set up house.

She had been in training for a governess, and why, oh! why, could not John Riley have left her in peace to follow that eminently respectable, if somewhat monotonous vocation?

"It must be John Riley;" that Mrs. Hartley decided with a sorrowful shake of her head. Thanks to the blindness, or folly, or design of Grace Moffat, the young man had been afforded ample opportunities of contemplating Nettie's pink cheeks, and blue eyes, and golden curls, in the old-fashioned garden at Bayview.

She had counted there as nobody, no doubt, the demure little chit. She had been still and proper, Mrs. Hartley could well understand. At a very early period of her young life, Nettie was taught in a bitter enough school the truth, that speech is silver, but silence gold.

Nevertheless, young men have eyes, and John Riley was at least as likely as Mrs. Hartley to realize the fact that Nettie was a very pretty girl.

"And it will be misery for both of them," decided the lady; "but there, what can it signify to me, who have no reason to trouble myself about the matter, to whom they are neither kith nor kin? I shall never believe in an honest face again, Mr. John Riley, nor in a blundering, stupid schoolboy manner. There, I wash my hands of the whole matter; I only wish they were both young enough to be whipped and put in the corner, couple of babies."

And then as a fitting result of her sentence, Mrs. Hartley sent up this message to the Parade: "Mrs. Hartley's kind love, and has Miss Riley heard any tidings of her niece?" as by a convenient fiction Miss O'Hara was called.

The answer which came back was, "Miss Riley's best love to Mrs. Hartley. She is very poorly, and has sent for the General. No news of Miss Nettie."

"What a shame," thought Mrs. Hartley, "for them to keep the poor old lady in such a state of suspense!" and she went to bed, having previously corked up all the vials of her wrath, with the intention of opening them sooner or later for the benefit of John Riley.

Alas! however, for the best laid schemes of humanity. Next morning, when Dodson, Mrs. Hartley's highly respect-

able and eminently disagreeable maid, called her mistress, she brought with her into the room the following announcement:—

"It is nine o'clock' 'm, and if you please, 'm, Mr. Riley, 'm, is in the drawing-room, 'm, and Miss O'Hara——"

"What of her, woman?" demanded Mrs. Hartley, in a tone Mrs. Siddons might have envied, sitting bolt upright in bed and looking in her *toilette de nuit* a very different person indeed from the stately widow whose dress was the envy and whose tongue was the dread of all the ladies in Kingslough, whether married or single. "Don't stand there silent, as if you were an idiot."

"Miss O'Hara have gone off with Mr. Daniel Brady, 'm, if you please, 'm," and Dodson the imperturbable, having made this little speech, turned discreetly to leave the room.

"If she pleased, indeed!" Whether she pleased or not the deed was done and irrevocable.

For blue eyes, and pink cheeks, and golden hair there was in this world no hope, no pardon, no chance of social or family rehabiliment; not even when the eyes were bleared and glassy, not when the cheeks were pale and furrowed, not when the thick, bright hair was thin and grey, might Nettie ever imagine this sin of her youth would be forgiven and forgotten.

An hour had been enough for the sowing, years would scarcely suffice for the in-gathering.

All this Mrs. Hartley foresaw as she laid her head again on the pillow and turned her eyes away from the sight of the bright sunbeams dancing on the sea.

Meantime the door had closed behind her immaculate and most unpleasant maid.

CHAPTER III.

THE GLENDARES.

Twelve Irish miles from Kingslough, meaning fifteen or thereabouts, English measurement, stood Rosemont, the ancestral residence of the Earls of Glendare.

That fifteen miles' journey took the traveller precisely the same distance from the sea; but it did not matter in the

smallest degree to any of the Glendares where the family seat was situated, since they never lived on their own acres whilst a guinea remained to be spent in London or Paris.

Once upon a time, as the fairy-books say, the Glendare rent-roll had provided the head of the family with an income of one thousand pounds a day. There were larger rent-rolls in the United Kingdom no doubt, but still a thousand a day can scarcely be called penury.

To the Glendares, however, it merely assumed the shape of pocket-money; as a natural consequence the ancestral revenues proved ultimately totally inadequate to supply the requirements of each successive earl.

They married heiresses, they married paupers, with a precisely similar result.

The heiresses' wealth was spent, the paupers learned to spend. Gamblers, men and women, they risked the happiness and well-being of their tenants on a throw of the dice. Rents, too high already, were raised on lands the holders had no capital to get more produce out of.

"Money! money!" was the Glendare refrain; and money scraped together by pence and shillings, money painfully earned in the sweat of men's brows, by the labour of women's hands, went out of the country to keep those wicked orgies going where my lord, and other lords like him, helped to make a poor land poorer, and milady, all paint, and pride, and sin, played not only diamonds and spades, but the heart's blood of patient men, and the tears and sobs of helpless women.

In the quiet fields where the wheat grew and the barley ripened, where the potatoes put forth their blossoms, purple and yellow, white and yellow, where the meadows yielded crops that reached far above a man's knees, there was the Glendare rent sowed and planted, reaped, mown, garnered, gathered, pound by pound, all too slowly for the harpies who waited its advent.

The hens in the untidy farm-yards, the eggs they laid in convenient hedges, the chickens they hatched were all in due course sacrificed on the altar of rent. The cows' milk, the butter it produced, the calves they bore, might have been labelled "Rent." The yarn spun by an ancient grandmother, the cloth woven by a consumptive son had that trade-mark stamped upon thread and web. The bees in the garden hummed unconsciously the same tune, the pigs

grunting on the dung-heap, wallowing in the mire, exploring the tenants' earth-floored kitchens, repeated the same refrain.

Rent! the children might have been hushed to sleep with a song reciting its requirements, so familiar was the sound and meaning of the word to them. Rent! lovers could not forget the inevitable "gale days," even in their wooing.

What did it matter whether the tenants looked forth over land where the earth gave her increase, or upon barren swamps, where nothing grew luxuriantly save rushes and yellow flags? The rent had to be made up somehow just the same. Did the pig die, did the cow sicken, did the crops fail, did illness and death cross their thresholds, that rent, more inexorable even than death, had to be paid by men who in the best of times could scarcely gather together sufficient to pay it at all.

In the sweat of their brows was that income made up by the Glendare tenantry, and the Jews had the money. Fortunately in those days penny newspapers were not, and tidings from the great capital came rarely to remote homesteads, otherwise how should these men have borne their lot; borne labour greater than any working man of the present day would endure, and superadded to that labour all the anxieties of a merchant? The farmer then was a principal and yet he did his own labour. He had a principal's stake, a principal's responsibilities, and as a recompense—what? The privilege of being out in all weathers to look after his stock and his crops; the right to work early and late so long as he could make up his rent; the power to keep a sound roof over his head if he saw to the thatch or the slating himself. Add to these advantages a diet into which oaten meal entered largely and meat never; the luxury of a chaff-bed; the delight of being called Mister by the clergyman, the minister, the agent, and friends generally, and the reader will have a fair idea of the sort of existence led by tenants on the Glendare and other estates at that period of Ireland's history.

Landlords in those days had no responsibilities. Responsibility was at that time entirely a tenant question, which fact may perhaps account for some of the troubles that have since then perplexed the mind of the upper ten. By the grace of God and the king there was then a class established to spend money; by grace of the same powers there was a

still larger class created to provide the money the former chose to squander.

That property had its duties as well as its rights was a maxim which would have been laughed to scorn by those whom the adage concerned.

Once again we may find in this, cause for the later effect, of the lower classes now utterly denying that property has its rights as well as its duties.

Revolutions come and revolutions go; there is a mighty one being wrought at the present moment, which has arisen out of circumstances such as those enumerated and others like them, and happy will this land be if for once the wealthy can persuade themselves to personal abnegation as the poor did in days gone by.

It is hard to do so with the eyes of body and understanding wide open, but in proportion to the difficulty so will be the reward.

The great must give much now for the years wherein their fathers gave nothing; and if they are willing to do so, the evil will right itself, and a bloodless battle-ground shall leave an open field whereon the next generation may ventilate the differences of centuries, and settle those grievances which have been handed down from generation to generation, but investigated truthfully and thoroughly by none.

In the days of which I write, taking society round, the rich were all powerful, and the poor had none to help. It was a great and patient population that rose up early and worked hard all day, that ate the bread of carefulness and saved every groat which their poor lives could spare in order that milady and other ladies like her should fulfil no one single useful or grand purpose in life.

Were the sights of nature in her different moods sufficient reward for their uncomplaining labour? So perhaps the men and the women who never noticed nature at all, considered.

And yet there must have been some great compensation about the whole business, which perhaps we shall never quite understand here—unless it was to be found in the great contentment, the sweet patient adaptability of the people of that far away time.

The love of wife and children was wonderfully dear to those toilers on the land, and as a rule they had tender, helpful wives, and dutiful, hardworking children. There

was peace at home, let the agent be never so unquiet; there was no straining this way and struggling in that direction.

The oaten meal porridge was eaten in thankfulness, and no dissension curdled the milk with which the mess was diluted. They were too poor, and too dependent one upon another to quarrel, added to which the Almighty had bestowed upon them that power of knowing when to speak and when to refrain, which adds so mightily to the well-being of households.

"The world," says the old adage, "grows wiser and weaker;" comparing the poor of these days with the poor of a long ago period, it is to be feared they do not grow better.

Concerning the rich, it is to be hoped they grow wiser than their progenitors.

Wickeder it might baffle some even of the men whose doings now astonish worthy magistrates and learned judges, to become.

No man of the present day at all events dare emulate the doings of those historical Glendares, and yet one redeeming point may be stated in their favour. They exhibited their vices where they spent their money. On the rare occasions when they honoured the family mansion with their presence, they left their immoralities behind them. They came like leeches to suck the life's blood out of their tenants; to assert feudal superiority in the matter of votes; to get out of the way of importunate creditors; sometimes it might be to recruit health, enfeebled by London hours and London dissipation: but no tenant ever had cause to curse the day when his daughter's pretty face was commented on by one of the Glendares, old or young; no farmer's wife ever had reason to weep for a child worse than dead through them; no household held a vacant place in consequence of any ill wrought by my lord or one belonging to him.

Indeed that was just the sort of evil my lord would not have brooked on the part of one belonging to him.

He knew the people he had to deal with, and understood precisely the straw which should break the camel's back of their endurance.

So to put it, he and his were on their good behaviour when they crossed the channel; and accordingly, though never worse landlords cursed a soil than these men who had come

in with the second Charles, and not gone out with any of the Georges, the Glendares were popular and well liked.

Perhaps for the same reason that the Stuarts were liked. They had winsome faces, gracious ways, familiar manners. The beggars in the streets had free liberty to bandy repartee with my lord, who always kept his pockets fall of coppers for their benefit.

Coppers! the pence were much to them, but what were they to him? And yet the farmer, from whose leathern pouches those coppers originally came, and who gave out of their poverty a million times more than their landlord out of his abundance, liked to hear the mendicants' praise of my lord, who had a word and joke for everybody, "God bless him."

And perhaps there was some praise due to a nobleman who, situated as my lord was, had a word and a joke for anybody.

It is not in the slightest degree likely that a single reader of these lines can know from experience the irritating effects which a persistent dun is capable of exciting on the serenest temper. Still less can the present race of debtors understand the horror that encompassed even a nobleman when he knew at any moment the hand of a bailiff might be laid on his shoulder.

Fancy capping jests under these circumstances with a bare-footed, imperfectly clothed Hibernian beggar who had never washed her body nor combed her hair for forty years or thereabouts. Could you have done it? No, you answer with a shudder; and yet that was the way in which gentry courted popularity, and "made their souls" in the good old days departed.

To the poorest man who touched his hat to him, my lord raised his; let the humblest Irish equivalent of John Oakes or Tom Styles ask audience, he was asked into the presence-chamber. On his agent, on his lawyers, my lord thrust the unpleasant portion of the land question, and every tenant on that wide estate was from his own personal experience firmly convinced that if his landlord could only be privately informed how wrong many things were, he would publicly redress them.

"Not but what the lawyers and the agent were very pleasant gentlemen, only it was not natural they should take the same interest in the soil as his lordship," and so forth.

Whereas those unhappy gentlemen were always trying to moderate his lordship's demands, always trying to make that most worthy nobleman understand there was a limit to a farmer's purse, a point beyond which a man could not, physically or pecuniarily, be safely bled.

Besides Rosemont the Glendare owned other residences in Ireland: Glendare Castle, a black ruin, the foundations of which were washed by the wild Atlantic waves; Beechwood, a lovely property occupied by a certain Major Coombes, who kept the place in good order to the exceeding mortification of his landlord, who considered the well-kept lawns and trim flower-gardens and richly stocked conservatories a tacit reproach to himself; to say nothing of several dilapidated shooting-lodges that were either rented by poor gentlemen farmers, or else going to ruin as fast as damp and neglect could take them.

Had any one of the family set himself to the task of freeing the estates, he might have succeeded. Had any fresh earl when he returned to Rosemont, after laying the body of his predecessor in the old Abbey overlooking the sea, faced the question of his difficulties, and determined to rid his property of debt and the Jews, he might even at the eleventh hour have saved those broad acres for his posterity and won ease of mind and blessings from his inferiors for himself. Until the very last, the disease though deep seated was not incurable; but not one of those careless earls ever had courage to endure the remedy.

After the funeral of each successive nobleman, the next heir hied him back to London, or Paris, or Baden, or some other favourite resort; and the Jews and the lawyers and the middle-men prospered and fattened on the Glendare pastures, whilst both landlord and tenants led wretched, anxious lives, the first driven almost mad by the harpies, whose cry from January to December was "More, more," the latter toiling to fill a purse out of which the money poured faster than it could be thrown in.

Yes, they were doomed in those days of which I write—the Glendares gracious in manner, false at heart; lightly had their lands been won, lightly it seemed destined they should go. And yet there was one of the family towards whom the eyes of the tenantry turned with hope, though he was not heir-apparent, or presumptive, or anything of the sort.

He was resident, however, and that, in the estimation of the Glendare dependents, was a virtue and a promise in itself. Since his earliest youth Robert Somerford had lived amongst his uncle's tenantry; not from any desire on his part to do so, the reader may be certain, but simply because Mrs. Somerford having no money to live anywhere else, had been glad enough when left a widow, to embrace Lord Glendare's offer for her to take up her abode at Rosemont, and make her moderate income go as far as she could in one wing of that commodious family mansion.

The Hon. Mrs. Somerford never made even a pretence of being contented with this arrangement. She gave herself airs, she openly stated her dislike to the country and its inhabitants; she never visited the poor, or the rich either if she could help it, for that matter; she never assisted the sick and needy; the ready graceful charity of that generous peasantry she laughed to scorn; indeed, as Mrs. Hartley, herself a distant kinswoman of Lord Glendare's relative declared, "Mrs. Somerford was a truly detestable woman."

But Lord Glendare had loved his younger brother, her husband, and for the sake of the dead gave shelter to the widow and her son, the latter of whom grew up amongst the Irish people as has been stated.

Had fate so willed it, he would gladly have left Ireland and the people behind him for ever. Aliens the Glendares were when to John Somerford, first Earl, King Charles granted those lands, privileges, and so forth, of which mention has already been made; and aliens they remained through the years that followed. They were not of the soil; better they loved the pavement of Bond Street than all the shamrocks of the sainted isle; but as already hinted, they were a plausible and an adaptable race, possessed of manners that might have pleased their first royal patron, not given to tramp unnecessarily on people's corns and blessed with that ready courtesy, which if it mean in reality very little, conveys the idea of intending a great deal.

Certain were the tenants that some day Mr. Robert would put matters right for them with my lord.

"He is like one of ourselves, bless his handsome face," said the women, enthusiastically. "He has sat down there," and the speaker would point to a settle opposite, "many and many a time, and taken the children on his

knee, and rested his gun in the corner, and eaten a potato and salt with as much relish as if it had been a slice off a joint."

"And his tongue is like ours," some man would continue. "Even my lord talks English, and so do his sons, fine young gentlemen though they be, but Master Robert is Irish to the backbone. He will go away to Dublin and make a great name for himself one of these days, and then he won't forget the 'gossoons' he played with once, but 'insense' my lord into the wrongs that are put upon us in his name."

"There never was a Somerford a patch upon Mr. Robert," sometimes cried a female voice when the conversation turned upon Rosemont and its inhabitants. At which juncture a tenant more wise, more just, or more prudent than the woman-kind, was certain to interpose with a cautious remark—

"Hoot! ye shouldn't say that, the young lords are wonderful fine lads to be sure."

From all of which it will be perceived that another earl now received the Glendare rents from that lamented nobleman who ruled over his vassals at the time George the Fourth began his glorious reign.

He lay in Ballyknock Abbey securely cased in elm and soldered down in lead, and, for greater safety, boxed up a third time in oak; and Louis, the son he hoped might obtain an appointment in the Royal Household, and who did obtain it, reigned in his stead.

Thus a new race was springing up not one whit less extravagant, selfish, short-sighted, and evilly inclined than the former generation. Strange tales about the Glendare *ménage*, and the Glendare doings found their way across the channel to Dublin, and thence down to the better class of houses in the colder and darker north,—tales whereat sometimes society lifted up its hands and covered its face, tales at which it shook its decorous head, tales of shifts and subterfuges at which it was not in Irish nature to avoid laughing.

A volcano was threatening the land, but the Glendares danced unconscious on the edge of the crater. The skeleton ruin was creeping up to their gates, but they only threw those gates open the wider, and bade more guests enter. A cloud of debt, once no bigger than a man's hand, now

covered almost the whole of their social future, and yet, each day, fresh debts were contracted.

The Countess was one of the queens whose voice was potent at Almack's.

She had been a great beauty in her youth. Artists had painted, sculptors moulded her, poets had written verses in her honour, philosophers had basked in her smiles, statesmen esteemed it an honour to receive a tap from her fan.

But the loveliness was gone, as the lands were going, and everybody knew it.

She had immediately before the period when this story opens, received an intimation from her husband that as an election was imminent, it would be necessary for them both to repair to Ireland; and when she looked in the glass, to trace precisely the change which the years come and gone since she had canvassed for votes before had wrought, she sighed at the alteration made not so much by time as by the harassing life led of her own choice and her own free will.

"Heigho!" she thought, "who would imagine I had once been the beautiful Lady Trevor?" and then she put on a little more rouge, and decided that after all the change was more apparent to her than it could be to any one else.

Happy in this delusion, my lady arrived at Rosemont on the morning of the day when all Kingslough was in consternation at high noon by reason of Nettie O'Hara's disappearance.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW THE NEWS ARRIVED.

It was a remarkable fact that although of the three ladies who kept the only circulating library Kingslough boasted, one was deaf, a second nearly blind, and the third afflicted with lameness, nowhere in the town was such early and reliable information concerning important events to be obtained as in the small room lined with shelves, wihch were filled with ragged, soiled, generally imperfect, and sometimes wholly disabled books, which had passed through hundreds of hands, and done duty at various other circulating libraries before settling down for life amongst the inhabitants of that dull little seaport town.

In the pleasant days of old, few people in Ireland worked for their living. There was an idea abroad that to labour for daily bread could by no possibility be the right thing to do; and accordingly, as human beings found it impossible to live without bread, or at all events potatoes, as pennies were very scarce, even if the price of provisions was inconceivably low, a convenient series of fictions obtained amongst the Hibernians, that if any work was done it was performed entirely as a matter of pleasure or occupation.

Even the very labourers, most of whom had their few acres of rush or daisy-covered land, farmed by their wives and children, went to the estate on which they chanced to be employed, "Just to oblige the masther."

The work was done fairly and the wages received regularly, but it pleased them to make the latter seem by a figure of speech rather an accident than a result.

And the same spirit pervaded all ranks. If a young man more clever and more fortunate than his fellows had a secretary's place offered, he accepted it merely, so partial friends declared, because "Lord This or That was so good to him; treated dear George like his own son." Did a boy enter the navy, "he could never, his relations declared, be happy on shore, so they were glad to humour his whim." Did a brother scrape together all the family resources and purchase a commission in a cavalry regiment, the girls were delighted, because "Charley never was happy out of the saddle." Did a man read hard and study hard and go in for the bar, mamma murmured in a delicious brogue, "Henery had always a turn for arguing and making speeches;" whilst if a keen young fellow were sufficiently lucky to own an attorney uncle, friendly enough and rich enough to find money to article the lad to himself, the matter was generally put in some such light as this:—

"Jack is going to Dublin to help his uncle. The dear old man's business—almost entirely confined to the nobility—is increasing just as fast as his health is failing, and so he asked Jack if he would mind assisting him, and of course it will not be any extra expense to us, as he would not have Jack there and give him nothing."

As regards the Church, I really think there was no need to put a false gloss on the motives of any man who entered it then, so far at least as money was concerned. The great

prizes were not many. The pay of curates was ridiculously small; so small indeed that few save those possessed o adequate private means could have been found among their ranks; but perhaps this was the only career concerning which a fair amount of candour prevailed.

To India, indeed, men did not scruple to say they were going, simply and purely to make their fortunes; but then India was a long way off, and the fortunes men had made there, the undying names they had left behind, the pages their deeds filled in history, read like the enchanted story of some eastern romance.

By a similar convenient fiction to that employed by men, if ladies worked, it was because they liked employment, not because they earned money.

Supposing "family circumstances" induced Miss Brennan to take up her abode in Sir Thomas O'Donnell's family in the capacity of governess or companion, she stayed there, so sympathetic friends would have it, not because Sir Thomas paid her fifty pounds a year, but because Lady O'Donnell liked her so much she would not hear of her returning to her friends.

Supposing Mrs. Waller and her daughters, driven to their wits' ends how to make the ends of their income meet! Visitors were expected to believe that all these screens Martha painted so beautifully; all these purses, glittering with beads and tassels and clasps and fancy rings, which Pauline knitted or netted with a grace and dexterity really pleasant to behold; all those pen-wipers and scent-bags and card-baskets and paper mats which the younger fry manufactured as industriously as though they had been inmates of a deaf and dumb school, were intended merely as free gifts to their richer relations.

That was the way Mrs. Waller put and her friends received it; with the light in which the richer relations viewed these works of art we have, happily, nothing to do. The delusion was kept up at one end; perhaps there was execration at the other. There are some persons who to this hour cannot behold an embroidered sofa-pillow, a set of dinner-mats adorned with robins seated on twigs; rural cottages surrounded with trees; foreign temples, and vague sea-views, all executed in Indian ink; a smoking-cap; a pair even of ornamental braces,—without groaning in spirit over memories of black mail, levied in the name of fancy work, that are recalled by the sight.

When however at a period many years previous to the commencement of this story, Mrs. Larkins and her two maiden sisters, the Misses Healey, opened the circulating library to which reference has been made, Kingslough was fairly non-plussed what to do with, what to say about them. In its way it was as bad as though an Agnew had started a mill, or a Riley taken a shop and expressed his intention of serving behind a counter. The thing could not be concealed. There lay the awful communication,—

"*Have* you heard," wrote Mrs. Lefroy, "that the Healeys are going to lend out books?" and then of course it became that recipient's duty to write to some one else. "My dear, *what* do you think? The Healeys are having shelves put up all round their front parlour, and intend making it into a *public* library," and so forth, and so forth, till at last some spinster more courageous or more inquisitive than her neighbours, went boldly and asked Mrs. Larkins what she meant by it all.

"Mrs. Larkins was equal to the occasion, she had not been left a widow twice for nothing.

"Yes; it is very sad," she sighed, "but we cannot give up our charities."

Now for many a long day the Healeys had, on the plea of giving to the poor, let the first floor to an old bachelor who, dying one morning minus a will, left them without a legacy or a lodger.

At once Kingslough accepted the Library, and its *raison d'être*. The idea had been suggested and the means found for carrying it into effect by a dreadfully vulgar man who made money somehow out of flax, in a distant part of the kingdom, and who having been brother to the deceased Larkins had given many a stray pound note to Larkins' widow, but all this was discreetly kept in the background.

"We cannot give up our charities," settled the business satisfactorily at Kingslough, and why should it not have done so when every hour, even at the present enlightened day, men and women have, as a matter of common politeness, to swallow doses of social humbug as large if not larger.

Not very long ago, the writer of this was expatiating to a friend on the bad taste of a wealthy and titled lady who not merely insisted on writing very poor verses but expected to be paid for them.

"Ah! it is for her charities!" was the reply. "What!

with an income of ——?" Not to be personal the amount shall remain blank. The reader, even if left to his internal consciousness, cannot fill it in at too high a figure.

"Yes, she is so good; she gives so much away."

In comparison to that what could Kingslough offer?—Kingslough, which has, I am credibly informed, gone on with the times, and now prints its own newspaper, and has its books from Mudie.

There was no Mudie when the Misses Healey converted the parlour of their "dear papa's" house into a room free to the public.

A second door was put up, to enable the hall door to stand hospitably open, and soon their friends began to consider the Library a pleasant sort of place in which to meet and while away half an hour. They visited the Misses Healey, in fact, and borrowed a book or so from them. And thus the ladies kept a roof over their heads, and retained their standing in society. If they did make charity an excuse, who amongst us, friends, has been so invariably straightforward that he shall dare to throw the first stone at them?

Let the man who has never played with that which is worse than lying—equivocation—stand up and condemn them. Charity begins at home, the worldly-wise tell us, and Mrs. Larkins and her sisters, who were in grievous need, bestowed it there. No beggar in the street was, after a fashion, poorer than they, and so they remembered their own need first.

But when all this was done they had still something left; a pot of jam for a sick child, a basin of soup for a weakly mother, tea-leaves with capabilities of tea still in them, for the old women, who loved their cup as their husbands loved their "glass;" clothes shabby and thin and patched, it is true, but still clothes for some half-clad beggar, and a few shillings even it might be in the course of the year given in cases where nothing but money could be of any use.

They gave what they could, and the beggars curtseyed to them, and even the young reprobates of the town—there were reprobates, alas! in Kingslough, dull as it was—sometimes lifted their hats, and always refrained from jeering remarks when the deaf sister and the blind paced along the Parade arm-in-arm together.

Further to the credit of the town, be it stated, certain hours were by the *non-élite* set apart for their own visits to

the Library. These hours were either very early or very late. They did not wish to intrude when Miss Healey had visitors, and in return Miss Healey acted towards them the part of a mother, and only recommended them such books as she could warrant from previous perusal to be perfectly innocuous.

Mrs. Larkins and Miss Healey might indeed safely have been planted guard, not merely over the morals of Kingslough, but of the then coming generation.

Could the old darlings rise from their graves, what would they think of the literature of the present day?

If a girl, attracted by a particularly taking title, remarked, laying hands on the book, "I think I will have that, Miss Healey," Miss Healey would turn upon her a wizened face, a pair of spectacles, and a brown front, and say,—

"My dear, you must not have that. It is a gentleman's book."

What awful iniquity lay concealed under that phrase perhaps the gentlemen of Kingslough could have explained. Certain am I no woman in the place excepting Mrs. Larkins and her sisters knew. Neither did the "lower orders." Had Miss Healey belonged to the strictest sect of professing Christians, her spectacles could not more diligently have searched profitable and proper reading for the young men and the young women who, being able slowly and painfully to spell out a story, were willing to pay their hardly-earned pennies for the privilege of doing so.

No new novels found their way to Kingslough. The youngest Miss Healey's shelves boasted must have been at least ten years of age, but they were fresh to the subscribers as the last work of fiction published. As a rule Miss Kate Healey, who was deaf, read aloud to her two sisters, but occasionally books would arrive, some scenes in which trenched so closely on their forbidden ground, that Miss Healey would decide against their public perusal, and undertake herself silently to grapple with the enemy.

As a woman twice married ("To think of it," as Grace Moffat observed, "while so many women never are married even once,") on Mrs. Larkins this duty would naturally have devolved, but time and other causes had rendered her eye-sight so bad that reading was impossible.

Indeed she could not find any other means of employing the shining hours except knitting; and "How thankful I

ought to be," said the poor lady, "that I learned to knit while I could see!" And accordingly, morning, noon, and night, she plied her needles incessantly. Counterpanes, curtains, shawls, reticules, purses, grew under her bony fingers. Miss Kate read the tenderest love passages to the accompaniment of those clicking needles ; and while Miss Healey, in the interests of public morality, was silently perusing some questionable scene, that everlasting knitting still made way.

Three busily idle women were those sisters ; always at work, and yet always at leisure, always ready to hear news, equally ready to repeat news. They were to Kingslough as Reuter to the civilized world. The Library was the central telegraph office of the day to the little town. Had it ever occurred to the Misses Healey to issue a newspaper, they might have produced edition after edition containing the very latest intelligence concerning the last piece of scandal.

To them, late on the evening of that summer's day when this story opens, entered, in great haste, a burly, red-faced, hearty-looking man, arrayed in a driving-coat, and having a large kerchief muffled about his neck.

"My compliments, ladies, your most obedient servant," he said, with a sort of rough gallantry which sat upon him not amiss, uncovering at the same time, and holding his hat in his hand in a manner which might put a modern dandy to shame. "I want you to find me a book for my little wife. Plenty of love, and millinery, and grand society ; you know her taste, Miss Healey. I am in a hurry, for I stopped longer at Braher fair than I intended, and my poor girl always thinks some accident has happened to me if I am late. Thank you. I knew you could lay hands on what I asked for in a minute," and he was about to depart, when Mrs. Larkins, full of the one subject of the day, interposed with—

"Oh ! Mr. Mooney, and what do you think about this sad affair ?"

"What sad affair ?" he inquired.

"Dear ! dear ! haven't you heard ?" exclaimed Miss Healey and Mrs. Larkins in amiable unison. "Miss O'Hara has been missing ever since ten o'clock this morning, and no one knows what has happened to her."

"Miss O'Hara ?" he repeated, "Miss Riley's niece ? a pretty young lady with a quantity of light hair ?" and he

made a gesture supposed to indicate curls flowing over the shoulder.

"Yes; and they have been dragging the river."

"And watching the tide," added Miss Healey.

"And poor dear Miss Riley is heart-broken."

"And she has sent for General Riley."

"I am very much mistaken if I did not see the young lady this morning," said Mr. Mooney, a serious expression overclouding his frank, jovial face.

"You? oh, Mr. Mooney! where?" cried the two ladies.

"Why, driving along the Kilcullagh Road with——"

"With whom?" in a shriek.

"With Mr. Dan Brady. I thought I had seen the young lady's face somewhere before, but his mare trotted past me so quick I could not identify it at the moment. Now, however, I am sure the lady was Miss O'Hara." There was a moment's silence.

"He must have abducted her, then," broke out the sisters, but Mr. Mooney shook his head.

"It is a bad job, I am afraid," he observed; "but she has good friends, that is one comfort. I do not think my little woman will want to read any novels to-night, Miss Healey, when I tell her this story. I am sorry, ay, that I am." And with another bow, for the Misses Healey were too high and mighty personages for him to offer his hand, Mr. Mooney, with the books in his capacious pockets, passed out into the streets, mounted his gig, untied the reins he had knotted round the rail of the dash-board, said, "Now, Rory," to his horse, a great powerful roan, and started off towards home at a good round pace, thinking the while how grieved his delicate wife would be to hear of this great trouble which had befallen respectable people.

"It is enough to make a man glad he has none of his own," murmured Mr. Mooney to himself, in strict confidence, and this must be considered as going great lengths, since if Mr. Mooney had one bitter drop in his cup, it was the fact that no living child had ever been born to him; that he had neither son, nor daughter, nothing to love or to love him except the little "wife," who beguiled the weary hours of her invalid existence with stories of lords and ladies, of fond men and foolish maidens, of brave attire and brilliant halls, of everything farthest removed from the actual experience of her own monotonous, though most beautiful and pathetic life.

Meanwhile Miss Healey having screamed the tidings brought by Mr. Mooney into Miss Kate's least deaf ear, the three stood for a moment, so to say, at arms.

"Anne," said Mrs. Larkins at length, "Miss Riley ought to know this," but Anne shrank back appalled at the idea of being the bearer of such tidings.

"Some one ought to go after them now, this minute," said Miss Kate.

"Poor, poor Miss Riley!" exclaimed Miss Healey. "Yes," began Mrs. Larkins impatiently, "that is all very well, but something should be done."

"I'll tell you what," exclaimed Miss Healey, fairly driven into a corner, which might excuse, though not perhaps justify her form of speech. "I'll tell you what. I'll put on my bonnet and shawl, and let Jane know what we have heard."

"The very best thing you could do," said Mrs. Larkins. So Miss Healey limped slowly off and told that "delightful Jane" the news.

CHAPTER V.

MR. RILEY'S PROSPECTS.

By the time Miss Healey, attended by her maid Sarah (although Mrs. Larkins and her sisters had astonished the proprieties of Kingslough by opening a library, they would never have dreamt of outraging them by roaming about the streets after dusk unprotected), arrived at Miss Riley's abode, that lady was in bed and asleep, lulled thereto by the united effects of excitement and that modest tablespoonful of sherry which Jane always mixed with the gruel she had nightly, for some dozen years previously, prepared for her mistress.

After mature deliberation Jane decided to let her sleep on.

"It would be only breaking her night's rest," she said to Miss Healey, "and what could an ould lady like her do at this time of night?"

"What, indeed! or even in the morning," answered Miss Healey, in a tone of the most profound despondency, whilst Sarah in the rear murmured sympathetically, "The crayture."

"But I'll just slip on my bonnet," continued Jane, "and

turn the key, and put it in my pocket, and run down and tell the Colonel; some knowledgeable person ought to know about it," and suiting her actions to her words, Jane dived back into the kitchen, took up her bonnet and shawl, and returning to the front door, resumed her conversation with Miss Healey, while she tied her strings and threw her shawl about her. It was thus she made her toilette.

"You're not afraid of leaving your mistress?" suggested Miss Healey, delicately interrogative. Three as they were, such a thing had never happened to one of the sisters, as finding herself alone in the house after dark.

"Oh! I sha'n't be away five minutes, Miss," answered Jane confidently, as she closed the door and put the key in her pocket, and trotted off along the Parade, after bidding Miss Healey "Good night," leaving that lady all unconscious that it had been Jane's regular practice, when her mistress was settled, and Miss Riley settled very early indeed, to go out and have a gossip with her friends, not for five minutes only, but for many fives.

A willing servant, always good-tempered, always ready to wait upon that poor, feeble old lady, thankful for small wages, content with frugal fare—a pattern domestic, but human nevertheless. And being human, the monotony of that monotonous existence would have been insupportable but for those stolen half-hours, of the theft of which Nettie O'Hara had been long aware.

And it was the knowledge of this fact which put a sting into Jane's words when speaking of the girl's elopement. She had trusted Nettie—perforce perhaps—but still she had trusted her with a confession of various visits, and interviews, and appointments, which she could not well confide to her mistress, and Nettie, having a secret herself, had heard all the servant found to say, and kept her own counsel the while.

Had she chosen any other man than Daniel Brady, and confided her love to Jane, Jane could have forgiven her; but she had chosen Daniel Brady and kept her confidence from Jane, therefore that model servant was very bitter indeed in her denunciation of Miss O'Hara's slyness.

"And to think that never a one of us should have guessed it," said Jane, in declamation to Colonel and Mrs. Perris. "Always with her books, as the mistress and me thought, taking them with her when she went to bathe, carrying them

to the shore when she had a spare hour, and the tide was out, sitting in the parlour all by herself with her writing books and such like, I am sure I could have taken my Bible oath she had never so much as thought of a sweetheart. And that she should have taken up with the likes of him. It was lonesome for her," added the woman, with a vivid memory of the unutterable loneliness and dreariness of that silent house recurring as she spoke. "It was lonesome, but sure if she had only waited, many a gentleman would have been proud and happy to marry an O'Hara, even if she hadn't a halfpenny to her fortune."

"It is a bad business, if true," said Colonel Perris. "Let us hope it is not true."

"I am afeard it is true enough," Jane, who was beginning to be "wise afterwards," exclaimed; "and the poor mistress will never hold up her head again. Can nothing be done, sir?"

"Not by me," answered Colonel Perris decidedly. "Miss O'Hara is no relation of mine, and I cannot interfere;" and feeling that this speech naturally terminated the interview, Jane, after executing a curtsey, left the room, and, true to her determination of not leaving Miss Riley alone for a longer period than she could avoid, hurried back to that dark, silent house, from out of which Nettie O'Hara had taken whatever of sunshine her youth and beauty could confer, for ever.

"I will write a line to the General," said Colonel Perris to his wife, after a few moments' silence, "and then wash my hands of the whole business. Shall I begin my communication as Jane did hers?" 'One says Miss O'Hara has gone off;' what a convenient phrase, commits no person, and imparts an air of mystery to the whole proceeding! I will not commit myself to the names of informants at all events," and the Colonel wrote:—

"Dear Riley,—Rumour will have it that your pretty young cousin has eloped with, or been carried off by, Mr. Daniel Brady. I trust Rumour is in error, but at the same time think you ought to know what she says. Certain it is Miss Nettie disappeared mysteriously this morning, and has not since been heard of.

"Yours faithfully,

"Frederick Perris."

"That will bring him if Miss Riley's shaky complaint does not," remarked the writer, folding up the letter, which was written on a great sheet of paper such as one never sees nowadays, sealing it with red wax, and stamping that wax with a huge crest. "Tim shall ride over with it first thing to-morrow morning."

"And then," suggested Mrs. Perris.

"Then it will be for the family to decide what is best to be done," said the Colonel significantly. "I am very much mistaken in Mr. Brady if there be no need of family interference."

"Oh! Fred," exclaimed his wife.

"Well, my dear," he answered, then finding she made no further remark, he went on,—"Poor Nettie! She has done an evil day's work for herself, I am afraid. So far as I can judge of the affair now, whether she be married or whether she be not, I would rather have seen her taken out of the Black Stream dead, than heard the news that woman brought here to-night."

"What is this Mr. Brady, then?" inquired his wife.

"Simply the worst man between Kingslough and the Cove of Cork," was the reply. "If that description be not comprehensive enough, say the worst man between Kingslough and St. Petersburg."

"How could the girl have become acquainted with—with such a person?"

"Why, what sort of guardian was that doting, sightless, decrepit old woman, for a girl like Nettie? She might have had a hundred lovers and nobody been the wiser."

"But, my dear, how many other girls are similarly situated, and it never occurs to any one to imagine that harm will happen to them?"

"How many other girls?" he repeated, "very few I should hope."

"Take Grace Moffat for instance——"

"Grace Moffat! How utterly you mistake the position. It was a leap, I admit, for him to speak to Nettie O'Hara, but he *dared* not have said even so much as good morning to Grace Moffat. You never will understand Irish ways or Irish ideas. Supposing a respectable man in trade had cast eyes on Miss Nettie, and offered himself to her family as her future husband, the Rileys and all who were interested in the girl might have lamented the necessity, but they would

have accepted the man. But suppose a man in that rank offered himself to Grace Moffat? Why, there is not a labourer at Bayview who would not resent such an offer as a personal insult. Grace may marry whom she pleases. With Nettie it was a question of marrying whom she could. Of what use is beauty in a land where a poor man fears to admire? I put it to you, Lucy, is there a man in our station in Kingslough or twelve miles round, who could marry for love without money, unless he wished to make his wife and himself miserable."

"What a misfortune to be an heiress!" sighed his wife.

"That sigh is not fair, Lucy," he said, eagerly; "you know I should not have asked the richest woman living to marry me had I not loved her for herself, but wedding portionless wives with us Irish is just like looking into shop windows. The articles may be very beautiful, and we acknowledge they are so, but we cannot afford them; they are not suitable for poor men. Had this been otherwise, Nettie never would have been intended for a governess. India, *or* a situation. If India be impossible, as it was in her case, then a situation. No man in her own rank dared have taken her to wife, and so she was fain to flee from the delights of being a pupil-teacher, even with Daniel Brady; whilst Grace Moffat, possessed of not one-half her beauty—one tenth-indeed—may pick and choose, can afford to keep on shilly-shallying with John Riley."

"My love, you make a mistake," said Mrs. Perris, rousing herself into a state of active opposition, "Grace Moffat will be a magnificent woman."

"Pooh! Lucy, what she may be hereafter signifies nothing. With Nettie O'Hara's beauty and her own position, she might have married Robert Somerford. As it is——"

"There, do not speak another word. Robert Somerford, indeed! That idle, good-for-nothing, verse-writing, harp-playing, would-be man of fashion; Robert Somerford, a man without a fortune, a profession, or a trade; no match, in my opinion, even for your pink-and-white beauty, certainly no match for my charming Grace."

"I see nothing charming about her," was the reply.

"That is because you are a man," said Mrs. Perris calmly. "Give her the chance, and ten years hence she will be the queen of society; but that is just what men cannot understand. They want a woman ready made, They cannot

believe that the sort of beauty they admire in a girl in her teens will not last, cannot last. Now Grace's loveliness will ripen day by day."

"You are eloquent," interrupted her husband, laughing.

"So will other people be on the same subject hereafter," persisted the lady.

"Perhaps so," he replied, "but I cannot say I agree with you. I have no spirit of prophecy, and in my opinion Grace is as plain as Nettie is pretty."

"Pretty, yes; not that I ever did, or ever shall admire a girl whose only claims to beauty consist in a pink-and-white complexion, eyes as large as saucers and as blue as the heavens, and long golden curls. I detest blue eyes and golden hair, and I abominate curls."

"Well, my dear, we need not quarrel about the matter. I suspect neither of us will see much more of the poor child's eyes and curls. I only hope Riley will give the fellow a good horsewhipping."

"That would not benefit her," said Mrs. Perris.

"I am not sure of that," answered her husband.

Riding into Kingslough the next morning, Mr. John Riley felt quite of the Colonel's opinion. There was nothing he desired so much as opportunity and provocation to thrash the man who had stolen away his cousin.

An insult had been offered through her to the whole of her relations. Longingly, when he heard the news, did General Riley's eyes turn towards his pistols; then remembering the degeneracy of the days he had lived to see, he muttered an ejaculation which had little besides brevity to recommend it, and asked his son, "What are we to do?"

"Follow them," was the quiet reply; but there was a significance in the way Mr. Riley wound the thong of his whip round his hand, that gave a second meaning to his words.

"I wish I could go with you," said the elder man, "but this confounded gout always lays me by the heels whenever there is any work to do."

"Never mind, sir; you may trust me," answered his son, laying an unmistakable emphasis on the last four words.

"You had better wait, and have some breakfast, Jack; the old lady never gives one anything except a cup of weak tea and a slice of brown bread and butter."

"No. I will hear what fresh news there may be, and then ask Mrs. Hartley to give me something to eat."

"I think you must be in love with that woman," said his father.

"I am afraid she is the only woman who is in love with me," was the reply, uttered lightly, yet with a certain bitterness, and, having so spoken, Mr. John Riley walked across the hall, mounted his horse, and, followed by Tim, went down the drive at a smart trot.

Grace Moffat was wont to say, a little contemptuously, that "any man could ride." Had her sight been a little more impartial, she would have acknowledged that few men, even in Ireland, could ride like John Riley. But Miss Grace had her own ideal of what a male human being should be, and the lover popular rumour assigned to her did not, in the least degree, fulfil that ideal. She liked black curly hair, dark dreamy eyes, a dark complexion, a slight figure; and John's hair was straight and brown, his eyes grey and keen, his frame strong and well knit. Her ideal had hands small and delicate, like those of a woman, feet which it was a wonder to behold, his voice was soft and pleading, whilst John—well, all that could be said in John's favour she summed up in three words,—"He was good;" and Grace was not the first woman who thought—any more than she will be the last to think—goodness an exceedingly negative sort of virtue.

But if Grace did not love John, he loved her. The affection was all one-sided—it generally is—and the young man comprehended the fact.

As he rode along the hard, firm road, his thoughts keeping time to the beat of his horse's feet, he took his resolution. Young though Grace was, he would ask her to be his wife, and if she refused, he meant to leave Ireland.

Considering his nation, considering his birth, considering his surroundings, considering the ideas of those with whom he was thrown in contact, this young man, with the straight brown hair and features far from faultless, was gifted with wonderful common sense.

Much as he loved Grace Moffat, and how he loved her no one save himself could tell, he could not afford to let any woman spoil the whole of his future life. He could not drag on his present useless, purposeless existence, even for the pleasure of perpetually seeing Grace.

He was young: and the years stretched out indefinitely before him. How could he live through them if he had no goal to reach, no object to remember having achieved?

This matter of Nettie O'Hara's put his own affairs into a tangible shape before him. Suppose, after he had waited and waited, and trusted and hoped, Grace chose some other man than himself—not like Daniel Brady, of course, but equally undeserving—what should he do? How should he endure the days, the months, the years which must succeed?

No! he would end it. Pink-and-white demureness itself, personified, had made her choice without consulting anybody, and why should not Grace, who was older and wiser, and who *must* know, and who did know, that everybody in Kingslough had assigned her to him.

Ay, there was the mischief. Young ladies do not like to be assigned. If Kingslough could only have kept silence; but then Kingslough never did keep silence. Well, he would try; he would take advantage of this terrible trouble which had befallen her friend, and avail himself of a time when he knew Grace must be full of sorrow, to speak to her about her own future and his.

Yes; whether together or apart, it meant hers and his. If she sent him adrift, he would try to make of that future something even she need not have been ashamed to share. If he wore the willow, it should be next his heart—other leaves he would wear where men could see them, where she might hear of them.

And this feeling governed his reply to Mrs. Hartley, when across the breakfast table she said to him gravely,—

"John, you ought to marry Grace Moffat soon."

"I mean to do so if she consents," was his answer.

"She is very young," remarked Mrs. Hartley, who did not quite like his tone.

"She is old enough to know her own mind," he retorted quickly, then added, "I am sick of this uncertainty; she must end it one way or another."

"You expect her to say 'No'?"

"I expect her to say 'No,'" he agreed.

"But you will not take that as final?"

"I shall take it as final," he said, after a pause, speaking slowly and deliberately, "Grace is no coquette. If she likes me she will tell me so; if she does not——"

"If she does not," repeated Mrs. Hartley.

"I must find something—not a girl—that will like me, and that I can like. Love is not everything, Mrs. Hartley, though it is a great deal. I cannot help thinking that the

man who lets any woman wreck the whole of his life for him is very little better than a coward."

"John Riley," said the widow solemnly, "you may thank heaven I am an old woman, or I should marry you whether you liked it or not."

"Dear Mrs. Hartley," he answered, "if you were quarter of a century younger, or I quarter of a century older, I should propose for you at once. Wherever I am, wherever I go, I shall always esteem it a privilege to have known you."

"Do not go anywhere," she said. "Marry Grace and settle down." But he only shook his head, helping himself to another slice of ham the while.

After all, he was a prosaic lover, Mrs. Hartley, spite of her partiality, could not help admitting. She was a woman, and so overlooked many facts she might otherwise have been expected to remember.

First, he had ridden eight Irish miles, fasting; and eight miles, on a bright summer morning, with the fresh wind blowing, was sufficient to give an appetite to a young fellow, in good health, who was innocent, moreover, of the then almost universal vice of hard drinking over night.

Second, this matter of Grace had been to him like a long toothache, which he could endure no longer. He must either have the tooth out, or know it could be cured. Grace must decide to have him for her lover, or do without him altogether. It might be very well for her to have him hanging about Bayview, accompanying her and her elderly maidenly cousin to flower-shows, launches, picnics, regattas, and other mild dissipations, but his idle, purposeless life was ruining his worldly prospects.

Had he meant to stay on at Woodbrook till his father's death left that already heavily mortgaged estate his property, the case might have been different, but John Riley intended to do nothing of the sort. He was fully determined to make money. He was weary of the shifts that cruel interest compelled his family to practise. He could not be blind to the fact that by reason of the pressure put upon him, his father was forced to put a pressure upon his tenants—bad for the land—injurious to them.

There was no money to do anything except pay the interest upon that debt which had not been incurred by them, which had been hung round the neck of that lovely estate by a

former Riley as reckless as prodigal, as cruel to those who were to follow after as any Glendare lying in Ballyknock Abbey.

There was no money—not a shilling to spare: father and son, mother and daughters, all had to bow under the yoke of that tyrant mortgage. There was no money to drain; no money to improve the land, and so enable it to yield its increase. The landlord was poor, and the tenants as a natural consequence were poor likewise, and John Riley, proud and impulsive, chafed under the bitterness of his lot, and would have left the country long before to try and win Fortune's smiles in other lands, but his love for Grace prevented him.

Once upon a time—no long time previously to that morning when he sate at breakfast with Mrs. Hartley, it had seemed to the young man a good thing to consider that when he married Grace Moffat, he would secure at once the girl he loved and sufficient money to lighten the mortgage at Woodbrook, but a casual remark let drop by Miss Nettie O'Hara, who understood her friend at least as well as her friend understood Nettie, opened his eyes to the fact that Grace Moffat attached quite as much importance to her "dot" as any one of her admirers.

"It is a thousand pities Grace's grandfather left her such a quantity of money," said demure but deep-seeing Miss O'Hara; "she would have been so much happier without a halfpenny. I am certain she will never marry any man who cannot in some shape or other lay down as much as she."

Now there was a significance in the way Nettie uttered this sentence which set Mr. John Riley thinking—what had he to lay down against Grace's fortune? Himself—ah! but then there was Grace's self—and her fortune still remained.

To the ordinary Irishman of that period—handsome, gallant, well bred, easy mannered—himself would have seemed a fair equivalent for the most beautiful woman and the finest fortune combined; but then, John Riley was not an ordinary Irishman, and Grace had in her foolish little head certain notions in advance of her time which did not tend to make her any happier.

For after all to be discreetly trustful is the best quality a woman can possess, and Grace did not quite trust John Riley any more than she loved him.

He did not possess the easy assurance—the confident self-assertion which usually marked his class. He was one of the exceptional men—one cast in the same mould as those who before and since have fought for their adopted mother, England, and saved her from defeat on many a hardly contested battle-field. So far as courage went he was made of the same stuff as those who fought the Affghans and stormed the Redan, and rode with the six hundred, and endured the lingering torments of Lucknow, and never talked of their courage or their patience afterwards; but he was ignorant of many things calculated, in those days especially, to win, by reason of their rarity, favour in a woman's eyes.

Even with his small stock, however, of drawing-room accomplishments, had he been more demonstrative, had he paraded his abilities, had he, to use a very homely phrase, made much of himself, perhaps Grace might have viewed him through more loving spectacles. As it was, she did not care for him at all in the way he cared for her. She saw the good kindly-natured John, possessed of encumbered acres and a somewhat plain face, and she was amiable enough to let him bask in the smiles of an heiress until such time as it suited the heiress to warn him off.

Without any *malice prepense*, be it clearly understood. If Grace had her ideal, that ideal certainly was not realized in the person of any man she ever expected to marry, or thought of marrying. She had not brought marrying home to herself in any way. She was romantic—given to solitary wanderings in the twilight and by moonlight along the terraced walk, bordered by myrtles, strewed with the leaves of the gum cistus flower, which blooms and fades in a day, fragrant with the scent of syringa,—that overlooked the bay. There she dreamt her dreams—there she recited to herself scraps of poetry—detached verses that had caught her fancy—there she murmured snatches of song, all melancholy, all breathing the language of unchanging love and endless constancy.

"Opinion," remarks one of the wittiest of our living* satirists, "does not follow language—but language opinion;" and if this be true as regards sentiment likewise, and doubtless it is, we cannot, judging from our songs, compliment the present generation either on its simplicity or its romance.

Foolish enough were the words young ladies warbled forty

* Dead, alas! since the above lines were written.

years since—but there was a tenderness and a grace and a fitness about the ditties of that long ago time which we seek in vain in modern verses. One merit at least was formerly possessed by the music and the story linked to music, that of intelligibility. Now when the story is intelligible, it is idiotic.

Not much of an ear could John Riley boast, yet he loved to listen to Grace's singing, and hearkened with something between a pang and a hope to the little thrills of melody into which she would break—just as a bird breaks into a vocal ecstacy—while they walked through the rose-laden gardens, or floated, oars uplifted, over the moonlit sea, the water diamonds dripping from them, making an accompaniment to the last soft notes of the duet sung by his sister and Grace.

And there were sights and sounds and scents that for years he could scarcely endure by reason of the memories they recalled—simple things—moonlight on the water—a sprig of myrtle starred with white flowers—a spray of jessamine, nestling in the folds of a white dress—the words of a familiar song. Well, few people marry their first love, and if they do, they generally repent that their love was compliant.

But John Riley had not yet fallen on those evil days in which memory was fraught with bitterness, although vaguely his sense foreshadowed them, when seated opposite to Mrs. Hartley he ate his breakfast with as much appetite as though, to quote that lady's mental observation, there were no such things in the world as love and disappointment, and marred lives and broken hearts!

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE TERRACE.

If, in the postchaise-and-four days, any record was kept of the runaway couples who were overtaken before the matrimonial knot could be tied, time has failed to preserve those statistics for us. From all which can be learned, however, it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred angry parents and disgusted guardians might as well have saved their money and spared their cattle.

Given a few hours' start, swift horses, and sound linch-pins, who could hope to overtake the fugitives? Most probably irate elders started in pursuit prompted by two motives,—one because it looked well to follow, even though the chase was useless,—the other because it gave them something to do. No reason, beyond these, presents itself sufficient to account for all the wild racing and chasing that was carried on at one period of the world's history.

To a more matter-of-fact generation, it seems unintelligible why old gentlemen, and still older ladies, should have risen at unwonted hours, and started off in frantic and hopeless pursuit of a pair of fleeing lovers, when they might just as well have had out their "second sleep" in peace, and awaited intelligence beside the domestic hearth, instead of posting, at considerable inconvenience and expense, over bleak moorland roads, to obtain the same identical news.

Riding as fast as his horse could take him, to Kilcurragh, Mr. John Riley had, like other enemies of "Love's young Dream," only two ideas in his mind—to discover the fugitives, and to punish the male offender.

Riding back, extremely slowly, from that undesirable seaport, after verifying the fact of two persons answering to the description of Nettie and her companion having left Kilcurragh the previous evening by "that fast-sailing steamship," so the proprietors worded their bills, "Finn McCoul," he felt much like one who, having gone out fox-hunting, has seen no fox to hunt—who, having taken his gun to shoot, has started nothing whereat to fire.

Although no vessel followed the "Finn McCoul" for three days, when the "Saint Patrick," then peacefully lying alongside a Scotch quay, would steam in the pleasant eventide down the Bay, on her way to that narrow channel which divides one people from another, it was quite practicable for Mr. Riley to have chartered some description of ship—say, even a collier—to take him, in swift pursuit, to the Land of Cakes. That is to say, it would have been practicable had Mr. Riley possessed enough of this world's wealth to pay his expenses; but the young man had no money to speak of, and supposing the case different, it is improbable that he would have thrown away bank-notes so foolishly.

No; the evil was done. All the yachts in creation could not make a better of it now. She had run away with him; she, an O'Hara, connected with many and many a good

family, with one of those wicked, dissolute, shameless Bradys, who had for years and years been casting off from them bit by bit, shred after shred, the mantle of family respectability in which they had once been proud to wrap themselves.

She had gone off, blue eyes, pink cheeks, golden hair, demure looks, with a man of notoriously bad character, with whom she had scarcely a chance of happiness ; but that was her concern, and now hers only. They were gone where, at all events, matrimony was very easy. That, in itself, was a good feature in the case, since, if he did not intend to marry the girl, why should he take her to a land where unions, very hard to break, were very easily formed.

When he returned to the few ancestral acres the extravagance of his progenitors had left him, it would be time enough to require that a more binding marriage, according to Irish ideas, than a mere acknowledgment of Nettie being his wife should take place. On the whole, she having elected to elope, perhaps it was quite as well things were as they were. There had been no scene; his horsewhip was available for further service ; society would be satisfied that, so far as a Brady could mean or do rightly, Daniel of that name had meant rightly by, and done rightly to, Nettie O'Hara. A grave scandal had been averted by Mr. Brady's choice of a honeymoon route ; nevertheless, Mr. Riley felt disappointed.

If a man go out to fight, it is intelligible that he should lament finding no enemy to encounter. To have ridden all those long miles, and found nothing to do at the end of the journey, was enough to try the patience of a more patient individual than John Riley. His common sense told him it was well ; his Irish sense felt disgusted. He should have to return to his father, and, in answer to his expectant "Well ?" reply,—

"They started for Scotland yesterday, and as I could not swim across the Channel, here I am, no further forward than I was when I left."

Still it *was* better.

John could not help acknowledging this as he gave his horse to Colonel Perris' man, and in answer to the Colonel's inquiry whether he had any news of his cousin, answered,—

"Oh! it is all right. They left by the Scotch steamer last night. She might have written, though, I think, and saved me the ride."

And the same to Mrs. Mynton and Mrs. Lefroy, whom he met on his way to the Parade, and to Miss Riley, who said she "never could have believed it of Nettie, **never!**" adding, "it is very hard on me at my age," to which, with a shake of her poor old head and brown front—people had not then arrived at that pitch of modern civilisation, grey false hair—she appended,

"Ah! girls were very different when I was young—very."

Considering the miles of time that stretched behind the period of her youth and of her age, John Riley might be excused if he muttered to himself that it was improbable she could have the smallest memory of what girls had been like at the remote epoch referred to.

Somehow the intense dreariness and patched poorness of that sad house had never impressed the young man with such a feeling of compassion for Nettie as he experienced when he found himself once more on the Parade, with the sea glittering and dancing at his feet. The faded carpets, the dingy paint, the darned table-covers, the spindle-legged tables, the dark, high-backed chairs, were fitting accessories to the picture which, years and years afterwards, remained in his memory of a feeble, palsied, half-doting old woman, who kept mumbling and maundering on, concerning the girls of her far away youth, and the ingratitude of Nettie, who had made, in her desperation, such a leap in the dark.

"It was a miserable home for any young thing," said John compassionately to Mrs. Hartley, "and no future to look forward to except that of being a teacher. I never was very fond of Nettie, but upon my word I do not think I ever felt so sorry for anybody as I did for the little girl to-day—thinking of what a life hers must have been."

"I was always fond of Nettie," Mrs. Hartley remarked, "and have always been sorry for her—I am more sorry for her now, however. She has taken a step in haste, which I feel certain she will repent at her leisure, through every hour of her future life."

This was at dinner—twice in that one day had John Riley to avail himself of the widow's abundant hospitality. He knew he could not thus make sure of that of Mr. Moffat—who although an Englishman, a Liberal, and abundantly blessed with this world's goods, liked friends to come after dinner, and to go away before supper, for which reason

his daughter's suitor usually paid his visits soon after breakfast, soon after luncheon—a very meagre meal indeed at Bayview, as in many of the houses across the Channel even to this day—or immediately after dinner, when he often had a cup of tea all alone with Grace in that pleasant drawing-room opening on the terrace-walk which commanded so wide and fair a view of the ever-changing sea.

He wished to have that cup of tea with Grace this evening—the Nettie who might have disturbed their *tête-à-tête* would, he knew, never disturb another at Bayview. He intended to ask Grace one question, and then, why then he meant to ride back through the night to his own home—a happy man or a disappointed according to the answer she made.

The consciousness of the throw he meant to make did not tend to render Mr. Riley an entertaining guest; and Mrs. Hartley, noticing his abstraction, said, as he rose from table, remarking it was quite time he was on the road again,—

"You are going to try your fortune this evening."

"I am; how did you guess that?"

"Never mind, I did guess it."

"Wish me success," he said in a low tone, eagerly seizing her hands.

"I wish you success," she answered slowly. "If you take care of yourself, you will develop into one of the worthiest men I ever knew."

"I will try to be worthy of your good opinion, *however it may be*," he said with a certain grateful softness in his tone, and then, suddenly loosing the lady's hands, he stooped and kissed her.

"Have you gone crazy, John?" she asked, settling her cap, which the young man's demonstrativeness had disarranged.

"A thousand pardons," he entreated; "I could not help it—forgive me," and he went—straight, strong, young, erect out into the evening, leaving her to think of the boy baby she had borne and lost thirty long years before—thirty long years.

Out into the evening—round to Colonel Perris' stable, where his horse stood, nose deep in manger, hunting after any stray oats he might hitherto have failed to find.

"Take him aisy, Mister John, the first couple of mile," advised the groom; "he has been aiting ever since you left

him. It's my belief them kinats* at Kilcurragh niver giv' the dumb baste bite or sup barrin' a wisp of hay and a mouthful of wather. Ride him aisy, giv' him his time, or ye'll break his win'; but, then, what can I tell ye about horse cattle ye don't know already? And shure ye have the night, God bless it, before ye—and thank ye yer honour, and long life to yerself," and he pocketed the coin Mr. Riley gave him, and held open the gate for the gentleman, never adding, as John noticed, a word of hope for Nettie.

Courteous were those Kingslough people, courteous and partial to saying pleasant things high and low amongst them, but any thought or mention of the Bradys tried their complaisance.

There was no hope for Nettie. John Riley, taking his horse at a walk past Glendare Terrace, and so, making his way out of the long straggling town, felt popular opinion had already given up her case as hopeless.

She had chosen her lot; Kingslough felt the wisest course it could pursue, in the interest of itself and Nettie, was to ignore the probabilities of what that lot might be.

A great scandal had occurred—a scandal so great that, prone as Kingslough was to gossip, it felt disposed to maintain silence over the affair.

In slight illnesses people love to talk over the symptoms and exaggerate the danger, but when the sickness becomes mortal, there ensues a disinclination to talk of it. Silence succeeds to speech, when once the solemn steps of the great conqueror are heard crossing the threshold. It is the same when a sore trouble menaces. In the presence of that enemy, even those whose happiness or misery is in no way concerned in his approach are fain to keep silence—and silence Kingslough maintained accordingly about the sad *faux pas* Nettie O'Hara had made.

But as yet Grace Moffat scarcely grasped the length and the breadth and the depth of the pit her old companion had dug so carefully for her future.

"Have you found her, have you brought her back?' Grace asked eagerly as she entered.

"There is only one person who can bring her back now," he answered, "and that is her husband. They went to Scotland yesterday."

* Anglicè—misers, skinflints,

"Oh, Nettie! What could you have been thinking of?" exclaimed the girl.

"I suppose it is the old story, and that she was fond of him," Mr. Riley replied.

"You have seen Mrs. Hartley,—what does she say?"

"What can she say? what can anybody say? what is the use of saying anything? Nettie has done that which cannot be undone, and we must only hope the match may turn out better than we expect. She has chosen Mr. Brady and left her friends, and she will have to make the best of Mr. Brady, if there be any best about him, for the remainder of her life."

"I think you are extremely heartless," said Grace indignantly.

"I do not mean to be so," he replied. "If I could help Nettie out of this scrape, I would spare no pains in the matter. But there is no help, Grace. We cannot remake Brady, neither can we undo the fact of her having gone off with a man who has no one solitary quality to recommend him beyond his good looks."

At this point John Riley stopped suddenly and walked towards the window, while Grace busied herself with the tea-equipage.

The same thought had occurred to both of them. Other people besides Nettie O'Hara might be influenced by good looks, and, as has previously been remarked, Grace's lover did not realize her ideal of manly beauty.

"Where is your cousin, Grace?" asked Mr. Riley, after a moment's pause.

"Gone to spend the evening with Mrs. Mervyn." It was a matter of common occurrence for the worthy lady who presided over Mr. Moffat's establishment to spend the evening with some one or other of her numerous friends. She had a predilection also for paying morning visits and receiving morning visitors, so that Grace's time was more frequently at her own sole disposal than might have been considered quite desirable had Grace happened to be different to what she was.

But although the young lady's manners were much less demure than those of her former friend and companion, she was really a much wiser and more prudent girl than Nettie. She might have wandered alone along the world's wide road, and still come to no harm by the way.

Poor or rich, it would not have mattered to Grace. No man could ever have made a fool of her. She had her faults, but lack of pride and self-respect were not to be classed among them.

A girl to be greatly desired for a wife; a girl who would develop into a woman safely to be trusted with a man's happiness and a man's honour; a girl loyal, faithful, true. She was all this and more; and John Riley knew her worth, and would have served as long as Jacob did for Rachel, to gain her in the end.

"Grace," he began after a moment's pause, "will you finish your tea and come out into the garden? I want to speak to you."

"What do you want to say?"

"I have something particular to ask."

"What is it?"

"Come out and I will tell you."

"Tell me now."

"Cannot you guess?"

She looked at him steadily for an instant, then her eyes dropped, and her colour rose.

"Yes," she said quietly, "I can guess; but do not ask. Let us remain friends, as we have always been."

"That is impossible," he said, "we must either be more than friends, or——"

"Or," she repeated.

"Strangers," he finished, and there ensued a dead silence which he suddenly broke by exclaiming vehemently, "Grace, you cannot, you must not refuse me; I have loved you all my life. I never remember the time when I did not love you. I do not ask you to marry me yet, not until I have something to offer you besides myself. I only want you to say, 'John, I will be your wife some day, and I will care for nobody else till you come back to claim me.'"

She was as white now as she had been red before.

"Let us go out," she said, laying her hand on his arm and leading him through the French window on to the terrace-walk. There was no hope; he knew it, he felt it, felt it in the touch of her hand, saw it in the expression of her face. "Why did you thrust this pain upon yourself and me?" she asked reproachfully. "Did not you know I could never marry you? Have not you heard me say a hundred times over, that I should never marry anybody? We have

always been good friends, why cannot we remain good friends still? I will forget what you said just now, and you must try to forget it too."

"Must I?" he answered, "well, the time will come when I shall forget even that, but not until I am dead, Grace. So long as life and memory remain, I shall never forget you," and he took the hand which lay on his arm, and held it tightly for a moment, then suddenly releasing it, he went on,—

"It was not always so; there was a time, and that not very long past, when you could not have stabbed me to the heart as you have done to-night. I do not say you ever loved me much, but you were young, and I believed you might learn to love me more; but there is no use in talking about that now, the new love has ousted out the old. You can never be more than a friend to me; that is the phrase, is it not? But somebody else may be nearer and dearer than the man who has cared for no one but you—no one else, Grace, all his life."

"I do not understand you," she begun, but he interrupted her.

"You understand me perfectly. Until Mr. Somerford——"

"Mr. Somerford and I are nothing to each other," she interposed eagerly.

"Are not, perhaps, but most probably will be hereafter," he retorted. "I know he is the sort of fellow girls go wild about."

"I have not gone wild about him," said Grace indignantly. "Are you mad, John, or do you think I am, to imagine Lord Glendare's nephew could ever possibly want to marry me?"

"I imagine your fortune would be extremely acceptable to a man who has not a sixpence, at all events," was the almost brutal answer. Disappointed lovers are not usually over careful about what they say, and this one proved no honourable exception to the rule.

"The same remark might apply to other men who have not a sixpence either," observed the young lady bitterly; "to Mr. John Riley, for instance."

He was calm in a moment, hating himself for the words he had uttered, almost hating her for the retort those words induced.

"Say no more, Grace," he answered; "you need not

drive the knife any farther home—it has gone deep enough already," and he turned, and would have left her, but Grace followed, crying out,—

"I did not mean it—I did not, really; only you provoked me."

"You meant, however, that you would not marry, that you would not engage yourself to me," he said, stopping, and looking mournfully and reproachfully at her in the gathering twilight.

"I am very sorry," she was beginning, but he interrupted her.

"Never mind being sorry. I shall be sad and sorry enough for both. You did mean it then, Grace; you meant truly that you could never come to love me, never while the winds blow and the dews fall."

"I do care for you," she said softly.

"Ay, but not as I want to be cared for," he replied. "Well, you cannot help it, I suppose, and I—but that does not matter."

It was all over; he was gone: she stood alone on the terrace. Strewed around were cistus leaves: through the silence she could hear the sobbing of the waves as they washed in upon the shore.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. SOMERFORD'S SUGGESTION.

Persons who knew anything about the Rosemont *menage*—and the persons who did meant all resident within an area of twenty miles of that place, and a considerable number outside the area indicated—were aware that as a rule on those rare occasions when Lady Glendare honoured Ireland with her presence, the Hon. Mrs. Somerford "availed herself" of so favourable an opportunity for visiting her friends.

Lady Glendare and her hon. sister-in-law did not in all respects agree as sisters-in-law should. To state the case fairly, they hated each other. This undesirable frame of mind is not uncommon even in much lower circles, but perhaps civilized and decorous and socially polite hatred never attained a stronger growth than between the countess and her husband's brother's wife.

Lady Glendare was certainly right in stating that they were not sisters-in-law, since rigidly they could not be called such near relatives.

"She is the widow of my late brother-in-law," was the form of speech in which Lady Glendare liked to describe Mrs. Somerford's position; "and as she is fearfully poor, poorer even than the Somerfords' widows have usually been (and that is indeed indicating a deeper depth of poverty than most people can imagine), Lord Glendare allows her to live at Rosemont with that great boy of hers, who does nothing, literally nothing. How it will all end I cannot imagine. He has no fortune, no profession, he has no chance there of marrying. Better have apprenticed him to some trade," and at this juncture, her ladyship, who having come from a noble stock who boasted a longer pedigree and a more encumbered rent-roll than the Glendares, always made it a rule to speak pityingly and depreciatingly of her husband and his family, was wont to fold her white hands and look up to the ceiling with that pathetic and saintlike expression of countenance which a great painter having beheld, has perpetuated in a portrait, copies of which are to be seen in old-fashioned scrap-books and amateur portfolios to this day.

Lord Glendare had married late in life, middle age for him was over when he led to the hymeneal altar his beautiful, youthful, and accomplished bride. On the other hand, the Hon. Robert Somerford had married early, comparatively speaking, and the son he left was many years older than Lord Trevor, heir-apparent to the Glendare titles and estates. Thus Mrs. Somerford was Lady Glendare's senior, and though a sensible woman and a hard, she had been younger, and she would have liked to remain so. As that was impossible, she could have wished all other wives and daughters a shade older than herself. As that likewise was impossible, Mrs. Somerford felt slightly dissatisfied with the arrangements of Providence, both as regarded the matter of age and other questions.

Further, Lady Glendare had been a celebrated beauty; the traditions of her beauty would endure, as Mrs. Somerford knew, to the last days of her life. Even yet she was a very lovely woman, possessed of an exquisite figure, of a gracious and graceful manner, a woman who had but to come, to see, or rather to be seen, and to conquer. She took the citadels of men's hearts by storm; at sound of her voice, at sight of

her smile, the battlements tottered, the walls fell. Virtue, as represented by Mrs. Somerford, was no doubt an estimable and discreet matron, but virtue felt its very existence ignored when Lady Glendare, concerning whose prudence doubts had been expressed, the straightlacedness of whose morals people more than suspected, sat in the same room with it.

All this, and the facts of her being my lady, of her first-born having the prospect of inheriting an estate which, encumbered though it might be, was still an estate, attached to a sufficiently old and well-known title, proved gall and wormwood to Mrs. Somerford; but, on the other hand, there were bitter drops in Lady Glendare's cup poured into it by Mrs. Somerford.

In the first place, if Lady Glendare were beautiful, Mrs. Somerford was clever. Without her good looks the countess would have been a nonentity. Without any good looks to speak of, had Mrs. Somerford's lot been that of an earl's wife, society must have acknowledged her talents. Added to this, she was, as Lady Glendare put the matter, the widow of a younger brother, and it is to be questioned whether an angel could under such circumstances have given entire satisfaction to the women of her husband's family.

Mrs. Somerford not being an angel, gave none to the countess.

Again, Mrs. Somerford affected an austere sort of religion, and the countess had an uneasy feeling that consequently, despite her unpleasant manner, in this world, her sister-in-law might have a better chance than herself of happiness in the next.

Expressed heterodoxy even amongst men was rare in those days. People did not perhaps think so much about religion as they do now; but when they thought about it at all they believed—ay, even people like the Glendares—that there was something in it; something they would have to face certainly, and arrange if they could, once the evil days came, when doctors and lawyers and clergymen would be the only society they could possibly entertain.

To Lady Glendare the idea of that last sleep in Ballyknock Abbey was inexpressibly revolting. Hating Ireland as she did, the thought of a certain village church, black with age, in a vault beneath which dozens of her progenitors lay, seemed a desirable resting-place by comparison; but even that was a possibility my lady shivered to contemplate.

Then if it were true, as Mrs. Somerford asserted, that it mattered not to her where her mortal remains were laid, what an immeasurable advantage the widow possessed! A woman to whose lips the verse of a hymn or an appropriate text occurred whenever her eyes opened, could never feel afraid of awaking in the night. She might be disagreeable, but she could have no sins to repent of. Mrs. Somerford's manner always seemed to imply that, though she spoke of herself generally as a miserable sinner, she merely did so out of a feeling of delicacy towards others.

She was not as the Glendares, every action of her life seemed to assert; and she made Lady Glendare, who, if a sinner, was also a very weak woman, feel her moral and mental deficiencies at every turn.

For all these reasons, and for many more, which it would require much time to specify, Mrs. Somerford found it, as a rule, convenient to visit her friends when Lord and Lady Glendare visited Ireland.

Every rule has its exception, however, and at the particular time when the reader is requested to visit Rosemont, it was intimated to Mrs. Somerford that if she and her son could make it convenient to remain at "home," so Lady Glendare civilly phrased it, she and the Earl would consider it as a personal favour.

"They want me and Robert," decided the widow, with a proud smile. "They want *us* to help them with the voters."

And the widow was right. Her brother-in-law was anxious on the subject of the impending election, and his agent had ventured to hint that Mr. Somerford was very popular, and that his presence and request might possibly be the means of influencing many votes.

Nay, he went farther; he insinuated that eventually, perhaps, his lordship might find it expedient to put forward his nephew in the Liberal interest, and suggested that it would be therefore prudent to keep Mr. Somerford well before the constituents, and remind them how close were the ties that bound him at once to them and the noble house of Glendare.

To the earl the southern part of the county, for which a Glendare nominee had sat for seven successive Parliaments, and with few exceptions, for Parliaments almost countless before that, was the only thing in Ireland for which he cared.

Had any person except the Marquis of Ardmorne offered him a large sum, a liberal amount for Rosemont and the other residences he owned in Ireland, together with the Glendare lands, the Glendare tenantry, the Glendare rights of wood, moor, and game, and mineral, to say nothing of shore rights and manorial rights, and rights appertaining to fisheries, Lord Glendare would—had cutting off the entail been possible—have sold them all, Ballyknock Abbey and the remains of his ancestors included.

But he would not have sold his interest in the county. Every man has his toy, if we could only discover where he hides away the plaything; and it was not possible for one to be long in Lord Glendare's company without guessing that the family seat was to him the only one thing besides money and his children for which he really cared.

He was very fond of all his children excepting Lord Trevor, but it is problematical whether in the event having been necessary of a choice between his family seat and his parental feelings, he would not have sacrificed them to that Moloch in whose fires had been already consumed money, friendship, reputation, honour, happiness, self-respect.

A pack of hounds could have been kept for a portion of the money that seat had cost. Even the Jews might have uplifted their grasping hands in amazement had the sum the return of a Glendare nominee meant been presented to them in round figures.

Agents had groaned over, tenants had sunk under it, not an agent on the property for scores of years who did not curse each election as it took place with a vehemence of denunciation in comparison to which all the comminations hurled at the heads of Israelitish and Christian creditors faded into mere common-place ejaculations of impiety.

One agent, indeed—the gentleman who had the direction of Lord Glendare's affairs, and management of his property at the period when Kingslough was introduced at high noon—had ventured, soon after the earl's accession, to remark that in his opinion the seat was more trouble than it was worth, whereupon his patron turned upon him like a demon and saluted his ears with such a storm of vehement invective and vile insinuations, that the agent left the house, vowing one day or other he would have his revenge on the passionate nobleman.

True, next day, Lord Glendare sent for and actually

apologized to him, and a hollow truce was concluded; and employer and employed, to the outer world, seemed better friends than ever, but Mr. Dillwyn did not forget, neither did the earl quite forgive.

So far as a man of his temperament and habits could keep a watch on his agent, Lord Glendare kept one on Mr. Dillwyn, and Mr. Dillwyn, who had his own very good reasons for imagining that Mrs. Somerford acted on emergency as spy for the absent earl—devoted his energies to outwitting that clever lady, and, all things considered, succeeded tolerably well in his endeavour.

A master-stroke of genius, however, was that letter to the earl containing the suggestion mentioned previously. It did not, perhaps, make the widow believe in him, but it caused her to reflect that perhaps her interests and his might not be so antagonistic as she at one time supposed. She had her hopes and her projects, and both centred in Robert. Besides, her vanity was flattered. Mr. Dillwyn had at last recognized her presence as a power.

And she was a power, if a disagreeable one. A woman competent to advise, direct, and assist a beautiful fool like her sister-in-law.

"I shall be somebody yet amongst the Glendares," thought she, triumphantly, "and Robert very soon shall be a great somebody." And all the time Mr. Dillwyn was weaving his webs, laying his plans, arranging his plots.

When the Glendare shipwreck came, as come he knew it would, he had no intention of finding himself on a barren rock, scarce of provisions.

He meant to stand by the vessel to the last. It is more easy, if people could only believe the fact, to do well for oneself pecuniarily by apparent loyalty than by open treason; but when the crash came, and the rotten timbers floated away over the ocean of men's memories, he proposed to be found high and safe; high above the waters, safe from their fury.

It was an understood thing that when my lord and my lady took up their temporary residence in Ireland, the rules which governed their English life should be completely reversed; in other words, whatever they did in London, they left undone in Ireland; whatever they left undone in London, they were scrupulous to perform in the Blessed Isle.

For instance, in London, they rose in the afternoon and

went to bed in the morning; and in Ireland they were called betimes, and retired to rest at hours which would, Lady Glendare vainly hoped, restore the once exquisite beauty of her complexion.

In England they never addressed an inferior save to issue a command, and in Ireland they entered into conversation with all sorts and conditions of men, the poorer and raggeder the better; in England they never walked, in Ireland the use of their limbs was restored to them as if by a miracle; in England they were always spending, in Ireland it was a fact that my lady often omitted to carry a purse, while my lord gave away pence and half-pence, but rarely had occasion to change a note.

In England my lord and my lady beheld each other rarely, in Ireland they saw a great deal more of each other than either considered essential to happiness. In England they associated with none save their equals; in Ireland the hearts of very middle-classed people, indeed, were made glad by invitations to Rosemont, where they instituted mental comparisons between their own modest homes and an earl's establishment, which caused them not to think the ways and modes of life "among gentlefolks poor or rich," so different after all.

Only it troubled simple gentlefolks to understand where the money went, as well it might. Some put it down to English extravagance, wherein I think an injustice was put upon England. Even residents in Ireland have been known to run through incomes and estates with surprising rapidity; but then, open house was kept by them, and half a county ate, drank, lodged at their expense. Certainly open house was not kept at Rosemont. Half the rooms were usually shut up, even when my lord and lady visited the ancestral seat.

As for Mrs. Somerford, she and her son contented themselves with a mere corner of the earl's great mansion. They dined in the library and sat in the music-room.

It would not have suited the widow's purse to maintain an establishment such as even one-half of Rosemont required to keep in order, so the shutters of the principal rooms were generally closed; the gilt chairs with their pale blue coverings were shrouded in brown holland. The mirrors and the chandeliers were enveloped in wraps, the tassels of the bell-pulls were hid away in bags, as were also those of the curtain-

holders. The statuettes were dressed in muslins. There were some good pictures on the walls, but no one cared to look at them. Some day, it might be, a new earl should come to his own, who would put life into all these sleeping apartments, people them—let in the sunlight—sweep off the dust; but so far, for generations past, the Glendares had cared nought for the place, which a former earl had when the title was still new built large enough to lodge a monarch and his suite, as was the fashion formerly in Ireland, where once every person who happened to be anybody, found himself over-housed and under-incomed.

When my lady visited Rosemont, she affected a certain west wing called the "garden side" by those employed about the place, and it was so far the garden side of the mansion, that the windows commanded a view of an old-fashioned parterre, and a glass door opened into a piece of pleasure-ground which might have delighted the heart of Mr. Disraeli's Lady Corisande herself.

There were to be found those old-fashioned flowers one longs for nowadays and never finds. There were the plants a false civilization, a perfect subjugation of individual taste to the dictum of interested tradesmen, have banished beyond our ken. That garden was the only thing connected with Rosemont my lady loved. There was somewhat of romance about the place—something which reminded her—so my lady said, to her London listeners—of the sweet peace of a convent garden, in that bit of pleasure-ground at Rosemont, enclosed as it was with thick low hedges of privit, amongst which grew roses and passion-flowers, and sweet briar and honeysuckle.

Assuredly it was a lovely little nook, where, in the earliest spring, crocuses and snowdrops sprang to life, and following fast in their wake came "pale primroses" and hepaticas, pink and blue, and the many-faced polyanthus and daffodil, a flower whose praises Herrick has not disdained to sing.

But it was later on in the golden summer time, that the garden side of Rosemont decked itself in the most gorgeous apparel, not merely in scarlet, and yellow, and blue, as is now the fashion, fleeting we may hope, but in every rich and tender colour the Creator of all things beautiful has made to render our earth lovely.

There shone—humbly self-asserting—the gentianella in her dark blue robe of velvet. There were beds where fairy

lilies of the valley made melody amongst their luxuriant foliage; there grew soft harebells, pale blue, transparent white; there were flaunting tulips, and showy anemones and ranunculus, the colours of which dazzled the sight; there were sweet auriculas and climbing honeysuckle, and a perfect wealth of roses—roses that have had their day and disappeared before the great, scentless, coarse, overgrown monstrosities that demand care and admiration from their lovers in the present genaration.

Against the walls of the house were trained myrtles, lemon verbenas, alpine roses, and the mysterious passion-flower both white and purple. That garden side of Rosemont was certainly, as my lady said, "beautiful exceedingly."

Not that the fact of its being beautiful exceedingly would have recommended it to any one of the Glendares except in an abstract and conversational manner. They had none of that passionate love of scenery, that almost savage fondness for hill and dale, for the wide sea and the foaming rivulet, for snow-crowned mountains and rock-bound coasts, which has served to stipple in a background full of romance and sorrow and pathos to the figure of many a reckless, extravagant, wickedly improvident Irishman.

But the Glendares were not Irish. They owned the soil, but they were not of it, they had not even that indefinite sort of attachment for the land which property usually developes.

They were aliens, every one, not excepting Mr. Robert Somerford, who, though he had managed to secure for himself so much good-will, cared really no more for any blade of grass in the emerald isle than he would have done for roses of Sharon.

He was as adaptable as other members of his family had proved themselves under various vicissitudes of fortune, but he was also as false.

Unknown to himself, perhaps, but still, certainly his whole life was a lie—an assumption of qualities he did not possess—of abilities with which nature had not endowed him, of affection forgotten at his birth. It was what they believed him to be, and not what he was, that the lower classes loved. And as regards Grace Moffat? Well, perhaps she too, like her friend Nettie, had admired a handsome face too easily; perhaps the accomplishments, unusual at that period, Mr. Somerford had cultivated, caught her fancy; perhaps—and this is of the three the more likely solution of the enigma—his close rela-

tionship to an earl affected the imagination of a girl born in a land the inhabitants of which believe in a lord as implicitly as any Republican who ever breathed.

He was as near the roses as any man could well be who chanced not actually to be among them. He had been born in the purple, though he happened not to be clad in it. He had lived much in Dublin and amongst the gentry of the South of Ireland, and his accent was softer than that which was obtained in the North—softer, tenderer. It conveyed much whilst saying little.

On the whole, perhaps, Mr. Robert Somerford was not a safe companion for a young lady whom her friends might desire to keep heart-whole; but as regards Grace Moffat, the evil had been wrought. For her earth held no hero like Lord Glendare's nephew, for her nature presented no desirable type of man, save one, and that one assumed the shape of Mr. Robert Somerford, who, seated in the room which commanded a view of the garden previously mentioned, was trying, not without success, to win golden opinions from his uncle's wife.

To Mr. Robert Somerford, Lady Glendare could afford to be gracious, amiable, kindly-mannered,—in a word, herself. There were many points in his favour, the chief perhaps being that there was not the slightest chance of his ever succeeding to the title and rent-roll of the Glendares. Between him and the earldom stood the young lords, and an elder brother of his father, the Honourable Cecil Somerford, who lived abroad, and was known by the family generally to have formed some undesirable attachment which rendered a residence in England impossible.

Mr. Robert had been thus preserved from waiting for dead men's shoes. Eventually he hoped Lord or Lady Glendare, or the Honourable Cecil, or some other friend or member of the noble family to which he belonged, would get him an appointment; meanwhile, it was clearly his interest to make himself agreeable and useful to his uncle and his uncle's wife, and accordingly he entered heart and soul into the business of canvassing and bribing voters, which had brought the earl to Ireland just at the time when, as Lady Glendare pathetically put it, "that dear London was pleasanter than usual."

But every one knew the opposition was likely to be bitter as usual, and more formidable than on previous occasions.

Lord Ardmorne had, of recent years, been purchasing land largely. Farms and estates Lord Glendare would have bought, had he only possessed enough money, passed into the hands of his wealthier neighbour. To the north of Glenwellan lay properties and townlands, hitherto owned by a non-resident Englishman, sinfully indifferent to Whigs and Tories alike, and to how his tenants voted; but he having departed to that very far country where we may humbly hope politics are forgotten, his heirs decided to sell his Irish estates, and Lord Ardmorne became their possessor. This threw a weight into the Tory scale which the Glendare party could not fail to regard with anxiety, and farther there was no question but that of late years, Kingslough, their own especial stronghold, had been developing proclivities as unpleasant as they were unsuspected. It was doubtful on how many votes the Whigs could certainly reckon even at Kingslough. Already the Glendare star was waning. My lord had been absent while his rival was present.

Lord Ardmorne was bringing capital into the country, Lord Glendare was draining it away; Lord Ardmorne spent part of every year in Ireland, sometimes for years together Ireland never beheld the face of Glendare.

In a word, any one could see the course was not going to be walked over, and Mrs. Somerford had not hesitated to express her opinion to this effect, with a certain triumphant bitterness which increased Lady Glendare's dislike for her. Not that Mrs. Somerford had ever done anything to strengthen the family influence, on the contrary; but then she had, so she modestly put it, no position.

In Lady Glendare's shoes she could have marched triumphantly to success; this her tone and manner implied, to the intense disgust of the countess.

Hours, so it seemed to her ladyship, had passed since breakfast, as she sat in her low chair near one of the windows, eating strawberries, an operation which displayed to advantage her beautiful hands. Mr. Robert Somerford admired his aunt intensely. She might be *passée*, but no one could deny she was still a very lovely woman, and to a man of his dreamy sensuous nature, there was something marvellously attractive in the easy, almost indolent grace of her slightest movement, in the way in which she made even the eating of strawberries a sight pleasant to behold.

At a short distance from Lady Glendare, Mrs. Somer-

ford had taken up her position, severely industrious. She was one of those dreadful people who never seem happy unless engaged upon some elaborate piece of work. Making imitation lace chanced to be Mrs. Somerford's speciality, and as those were the days of veils, long, wide, and white, she was engaged in fabricating one.

To Lady Glendare, who could scarcely have specified tho difference between the point and the eye of a needle, this industry appeared singularly wearisome and aggravating, but her husband felt secretly envious of his sister-in-law's resources.

It is not given to every one to do nothing with an exquisite grace; and clad in the snuff-coloured trousers and dark blue frock-coat which it always, for some inscrutable reason, pleased him to don when he came to Rosemont, his lordship drumming an irritable tattoo on the table, was perhaps conscious that he did not form by any means so pleasing a feature in the tableau as his wife.

"Ardmorne has given three picnics and two balls," Mr. Somerford was remarking.

"What a pity we could not have gone to them," said her ladyship, whilst Lord Glendare muttered audibly a commination service over his neighbour, consisting of two monosyllables.

"Hu—sh!" Mrs. Somerford entreated, holding up her finger.

"It is all very well to say 'hush,'" retorted her brother-in-law, "but when a fellow like that, wallowing in money as if it were dirt, shows fight on our very doorstep, as I may say, it is enough to made any man swear."

"I don't see how swearing can mend the matter," observed Mrs. Somerford.

Lady Glendare tranquilly conveyed another strawberry to her lips; the tattoo grew ominously loud; Mrs. Somerford thought it expedient to devote her attention to a particular stitch she was executing; Robert Somerford began once more,—

"The question is, with what weapons we can fight him."

"That is practical, Robert," said his aunt. "That is precisely the observation I have been hoping some one would make. Here am I, exiled to this picturesque but barbarous land, willing to do anything if I am only told what is required of me. I have canvassed before, I am ready to

canvass again. I will beg, buy, borrow, or steal votes. I can give balls, I can arrange picnics, though they are a form of entertainment I detest."

"If you could only tell one where to get some money," interrupted the earl.

"Ah! now you ask me something quite beyond my power," was the calm reply. "Had I ever possessed any inventive genius of that kind, it would have been exhausted years since."

"There is one way in which you might propitiate the Kingslough worthies, however, that would not involve any pecuniary outlay," said Mr. Somerford, hastily cutting across the retort his uncle was about to make.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Lady Glendare, raising her eyes and looking at the speaker with a certain languid interest. "How can such a desirable object be compassed in so desirable a manner?"

"If you would honour Kingslough by bathing there, I think we might safely set Ardmorne at defiance," answered Mr. Somerford, with the slightest touch of mock deference in his voice.

"Do you mean to bathe in the sea?" ask her ladyship, still toying with the rich, ripe fruit. "I am afraid it would be impossible for me to 'honour' Kingslough to that extent. How should you propose my setting about it? I do not see how I could run across the shingle after the fashion which prevails in this charming country, with no clothing except a bathing-dress, cloak, and a pair of slippers, and after a few plunges return in like manner. No doubt the spectacle might prove amusing to the bystanders, but it certainly would be anything but agreeable to the performer."

"My dear aunt, do you think I should for one moment have asked you, even in jest, to attempt anything of that kind? No, I have been considering the matter seriously, and mean precisely what I say, namely, that if you would honour Kingslough so far as to try the effect of sea-bathing on your health, we might calculate on carrying the town and neighbourhood by storm. Any of the inhabitants whose houses are close on the shore, I mean who have back entrances to the sea, would be only too happy to place them at your service, or, what would be a still better plan, make use of Miss Moffat's bathing-box. It is like a little castle built out on the Lonely Rock. There is always deep water

at that point, and the place is fitted up perfectly, my mother says."

"Yes, Mr. Moffat has spared no expense," Mrs. Somerford agreed.

"And who is this Miss Moffat?" asked Lady Glendare.

"She is the only daughter of a gentleman who, although he has the misfortune to care very little about politics, still has the good fortune, so far as he does care about politics, to be of our way of thinking."

"Dillwyn said he was breaking a horse for her," observed the earl at this juncture.

"Dillwyn only told you that to account for his having so valuable an animal in his possession," answered Mr. Somerford with sudden heat.

"Do you mean to imply he said that which was perfectly untrue?" asked his uncle.

"Certainly."

"Now, Robert," entreated Mrs. Somerford.

"There can be no doubt Mr. Dillwyn would like extremely to get hold of Miss Moffat's fortune, but——"

"I must listen to this," exclaimed Lady Glendare. "The conversation is becoming quite interesting. Pray proceed, Robert. Do not be influenced by Mrs. Somerford's signs of wisdom. Mr. Dillwyn is a dishonest steward. According to popular belief there has never been an honest one on the property, so that is nothing new; but it is new to have an agent in love. Do tell me all about it."

"I was speaking of Miss Moffat's fortune," said Mr. Somerford with an impatient emphasis on the last word.

"Is it large, and is she nice? Why not marry her yourself?" asked her ladyship.

"I trust my son will never marry for money," said Mrs. Somerford, in accents of dignified rebuke.

"Your son will be a much greater simpleton than I fancy, if he ever marry without it," remarked Lord Glendare.

"Pray let Robert finish his romance," entreated her ladyship. "Mr. Dillwyn wishes to marry an heiress, and as I understand your tone, the heiress deserves a better fate, and is conscious of her deserts. Now tell me about her. Is she young?"

"Miss Moffat is young," said Mrs. Somerford, answering for her son. "Concerning her appearance opinions are divided. She has a considerable fortune for a person in her

rank of life, and I, for one, think it would give rise to jealousy and dissatisfaction if Lady Glendare were to single out for special attention the daughter of a gentleman who is not particularly popular, and who has herself, as is well known, been engaged almost from childhood to Mr. John Riley, whose father is an active supporter of Lord Ardmorne."

The countess rose, put the plate containing her remaining strawberries on a table close at hand, and said,—

"Robert, life becomes serious when your mother touches it. I am going into the park, you can come with me if you like."

Next moment they were in the old-fashioned garden. A few moments later they were sauntering slowly along a shaded path which led to the more pretentious grounds beyond.

"For pity's sake," began Lady Glendare, "do not disparage Mr. Dillwyn to the earl. He may have all the sins in the decalogue, but he has one virtue,—he refrains from troubling me about the condition of this interesting peasantry. You want to have the agency and marry Miss Moffat; Mrs. Somerford wants you to have the agency and not to marry Miss Moffat. My advice is, marry Miss Moffat, and neither hunger nor thirst after the agency. You could never give satisfaction, never; whereas, with this heiress, you might get returned at the next election, and then almost choose your career. *We* can do nothing for you, I am sorry to say. My sons will require all the influence we can bring to bear to get even a bare living. Who is this unwelcome individual, the fact of whose existence your mother so triumphantly announced? If you are wise, do not let him carry off Miss Moffat."

There is an advantage one has in dealing with selfish people who are not specially clever. They show what they want almost at the first move of the game. It may not be in the power of any man to hinder their getting their way, winning their game, but at all events he is not taken unawares. Mr. Somerford, who was, perhaps, not one whit cleverer than her ladyship, though he chanced to be more plausible, understood clearly what she meant.

She disliked poor relations—she would be glad if he married well—then, when he had helped himself, she and the earl might, perhaps, lift a finger to help him on a little farther.

It was not what he had wished—it was not what he had hoped, but he accepted the position, and answered with an amount of self-depreciation which, coming from Robert Somerford, would have been really touching, could any one have believed it in the slightest degree true.

"I should not have the slightest chance of success. Report says the young lady has already refused Mr. Riley, heir to one of the loveliest properties in this part of the country, and where he failed it would be useless for me to try. He had every advantage on his side, whilst I have nothing in the world to recommend me except the fact of being related to Lady Glendare."

"And that fact you wish me to bring to Miss Moffat's remembrance?"

"No. What I proposed was solely in the interests of our party."

"And could your own not be served at the same time?" was the shrewd inquiry.

"No; for once my mother and I are of one mind. I should not care to owe everything to a wife, however amiable, and I am not quite certain that Miss Moffat's nature is all sweetness."

"Gather me that rose, if you please," said the countess; and whilst the young man performed her bidding, she looked at him with a keen worldly scrutiny.

That evening she remarked to Lord Glendare, "Robert does not yet know the precise sum an earl's nephew is worth in the matrimonial market."

"I should have thought that a point upon which your ladyship could afford him important information," was the bitter reply.

"Young people never believe the words of experience, and for that reason I maintain a judicious silence," answered the countess calmly. "My opinion, however, is, he will only find out how little there is in a name, even when combined with a brogue and good looks, when he has outlived the latter."

Mr. Robert Somerford was certainly not of one mind with her ladyship in this matter. Months before, he had given the Moffat question his most serious consideration, and decided that he ought to be able to do better.

Combined with his romantic and musical tendencies, the young man had a perfect knowledge of the value of riches.

He was, perhaps, as fond of Grace Moffat as he could be of anything beside himself, but he had no thought of marrying her—yet.

It might be, it might not be. It was all uncertain as the mystic " He loves me, he loves me not;" but on the whole Robert Somerford felt satisfied fate had a higher destiny in store for him than that.

CHAPTER VIII.

INTRODUCES THE NAME OF AMOS SCOTT.

Great was the consternation at Woodbrook when John Riley announced his intention of leaving Ireland; greater, if possible, the lamentations which ensued when he informed his relations that Grace had refused him.

Had it been possible to conceal the fact of his rejection, he would have done so, but he knew this was impossible, and knowing, made a virtue of necessity.

The family heart had been so long set upon the match, Grace's fortune seemed the solution of so many financial enigmas—the end of such wearing anxiety—that the news fell upon father and mother and sisters like the tidings of a bank failure, or the hearing of a will read, from which their names had been cruelly omitted.

For years the matter had been considered settled. Mr. Moffat had never troubled himself about his daughter's future. He considered her as good as married. Mrs. Riley had treated Grace just as though she were a child of her own. She was free of the house, came and went without invitation, or thought of one, as if it belonged to her own father. She and the Misses Riley lent each other bead and other patterns, made paper mats of the same design, sang the same songs, exchanged books, played duets together, and walked about hand linked in hand, or arm twined round waist. They went to the same little parties, they rode together, they boated together, they had all been close companions, they had been like sisters until about a year previously, when Grace took it into her head to conceive a violent affection for Nettie O'Hara, towards whom she had never hitherto evinced any extraordinary amount of attachment. Whenever Nettie had an hour to spare it was spent at Bayview. She could

not, it is true, go out to parties, and ride and drive and boat, and otherwise comport herself like the Misses Riley, but she could and did occupy a great deal more of Miss Moffat's time and attention than those young ladies approved. And yet what could they say? how was it possible for them to express their annoyance?

Nettie was their relative—her life not a cheerful one—her future presented nothing which could tend to make the future brighter. She had few friends, and those who stood in that position were most of them a few generations older than herself. Grace was very good to Nettie, gave her presents, and kind words, and kisses, which were exchanged as freely and effusively amongst school girls at that period of the world's history as they are now. Every person said how kind it was of the heiress to take so much notice of a portionless orphan. Some people hoped it would not make Miss O'Hara discontented with her lot in life, others doubted whether Miss Moffat was prudent in giving Mr. Riley so many opportunities of meeting such an extremely pretty girl—Miss Moffat, as has been stated, not ranking as a beauty amongst the Kingslough authorities—whilst a very small minority, who had sense enough to keep their opinions to themselves, adopted the theory that Grace was beginning to weary of the Rileys, that she was getting old enough to realize what such extraordinarily close intimacy meant, and what it must end in some day; that she had taken Nettie into favour as a sort of counteracting influence, and that if Mr. John Riley, without an available shilling, should choose to fall in love with Miss Nettie O'Hara, who had not a penny available or otherwise, Grace Moffat would not prove inconsolable.

In all of which ideas the majority was partly right and partly wrong. Grace had no definite scheme of transferring Nettie to Mr. Riley, but she found her presence at Bayview an intense relief. She liked John Riley, but she did not want to marry him; she was tired of every one taking for granted that she would eventually marry him; it was a pleasure to have a willing listener like Nettie, who believed, or who, at all events, seemed to believe her, when she said she would never marry anybody,—never. It was perhaps a still greater pleasure to find that Nettie's beau ideal of a hero and hers were identical, so far as words could make them so.

Till the locket and the ring discoveries excited Grace's

suspicions, she had not the remotest notion that Nettie owned a lover; but Nettie knew perfectly well that her friend was in love in a simple, innocent, romantic, foolish, inconsequent manner with Mr. Robert Somerford; knew when and where, and how Grace had first seen him, and was intimately acquainted with the dress Miss Moffat happened to be wearing on that eventful day.

Miss Moffat had never communicated those particulars in any intelligible and consecutive manner, but Nettie spelt and put together one thing and another till she was mistress of the position, then she surreptitiously conveyed to Bayview an album, some fifty years old or thereabouts, which contained a vile water-colour daub of a simpering and sentimental-looking young man, which nevertheless bore an absurd likeness to Mr. Somerford.

It was a picture of nobody in particular, but the eyes were dark and dreamy, and the hair soft and waving, and the nose well formed, and the mouth full and undetermined—altogether, a face likely to please girlish fancies in an age when ladies were always represented with button-hole mouths, opened just sufficiently to display two pearly teeth and a morsel of tongue.

Grace asked Nettie if she might copy this work of art, to which Nettie, who considered nobody would ever be the wiser, replied by cutting out the page and presenting it to her friend.

Some days later, after they had refreshed their memories with another look at the inane handsome face, Nettie asked Grace if she did not think it bore a slight resemblance to "that nephew of Lord Glendare?"

"Now you mention it, I think it does, dear," Grace answered hypocritically.

"I fancy so," Nettie proceeded, "though I never saw him close but once, and that was the day of Miss Agnew's wedding; but it is not nearly as handsome as he."

"I thought it was," Grace faintly objected.

"Oh, no—not nearly! Why, Grace, where can your eyes be?" persisted Miss O'Hara; and Miss Moffat was brought, by slow degrees, to see how infinitely better looking her living hero was to this portrait of one dead and gone years and years before; and thus Nettie fooled the girl to the top of her bent; and thus, surely and certainly, the thought of John grew distasteful to the heiress, and

unconsciously, almost, a fancy for Robert Somerford took possession of her.

But she never thought of marrying him. No; sometime, perhaps, she might die—of consumption she hoped, and he would hear of it, and be sorry when he remembered the girl whose singing had, he said, almost made him weep. He would marry some great and titled lady, whose loveliness would be wonderful, as that of the beauties depicted in Heath's "Book of Beauty," or in the engravings that adorned "La Belle Assemblée."

At that period of her life Grace read poetry largely. The number of "Farewells" she copied into a certain manuscript book, knowledge of the existence of which was kept secret even from Nettie O'Hara, might have astonished even a modern editor. The sadder and the more hopeless the tone, the better the verses pleased Miss Moffat.

She did not often see Mr. Somerford, but what then? The pleasure was all the greater when she did see him; and ill-natured people would have added, she had the less opportunity of finding out that her idol had feet of clay.

There is a time of life when it is a positive luxury to be unhappy. Grace was unhappy, and rejoiced in her sufferings. It seemed to her that she was experiencing the common doom, that she was in her own person enacting a scene out of a life tragedy.

No; she would never marry any one; she could not marry John Riley, "dear John, so good and kind—and ugly!" she always mentally added.

"A bad, ungrateful girl," said poor Mrs. Riley, whose heart had often been kept from utter despair by the bare thought of Grace's thousands, and who might naturally be forgiven some extravagance of expression under the circumstances.

"Deceitful monkey!" ejaculated Miss Riley.

"I did not think she would have served us so, I must say," remarked the General.

"I will never speak to her again," declared the youngest daughter.

"Then you may make up your mind never to speak to me," exclaimed Mr. John, happy at last to find some one on whom he could pour out the vials of his wrath, his regrets, his disappointment, and his disgust at the utterly prosaic view his family took of the affair.

He was most genuinely in love with Grace; he had, as he truly said, cared for no one else all his life; and he hated to hear lamentation made concerning the loss of her fortune, whilst he had not a thought to spare—love being selfish—save for the loss of her dear self.

"I may as well tell you at once," he went on, "that the person who says anything against Grace says it against me; that her enemies are mine, that her friends shall be mine;" he made a moment's pause after this, feeling he had not spoken quite truly in that last clause. "The girl has a right to choose and to reject. If I did not please her, it was my misfortune, not my fault; and as for her fortune, concerning which you all talk as though it were her sole possession worth having, I wish she had not a penny, that I might prove it is for herself alone I love her."

Then, with a catch in his voice, which sounded suspiciously like a sob, John Riley ended his sentence, and left the room.

"I will have a talk with her father," observed the General.

"I can never forgive her—never," said Mrs. Riley, solemnly, as though she were uttering an anathema.

"She will be content, I suppose, when she finds she has driven John out of the country," added Miss Riley.

"I wonder," began a young lady who had not hitherto spoken, "whether, after all, there is nothing to be said in Grace's favour. I wonder if any of us except John really liked her—whether it was not her money we were all so fond of."

"Lucy, you are wicked to talk on solemn subjects in that sort of manner," said Mrs. Riley.

"There is something in Lucy's notion, though," broke out the General. "This confounded money question seems to shadow every act in one's life like an upas tree. The girl is free from anxiety now; she would not have been free here."

"Will she be free if she marries Robert Somerford? tell me that," interrupted Mrs. Riley, almost tempestuous in her vehemence. "And that is the English of all this, if you must take her part against your own children. The arts and devices of some people are almost beyond belief. There is that Lady Glendare driving over almost every day to Bayview—coachman — footman — lady's-maid — lapdog, and who can say what beside?"

"Carriages and horses most probably," suggested her husband.

"Don't be absurd," retorted the lady. "You know what I mean. She walks with Miss Grace to the Lonely Rock—she bathes; and the facts are reported in Kingslough, as if there were a court newsman retained for the purpose. Mr. Moffat, who scarcely ever asked us to have a glass of wine and a biscuit in his house, entertains her ladyship at luncheon. Sometimes my lady breakfasts at Bayview! Miss Moffat accompanied her ladyship back to Rosemont on Saturday, and returned to Bayview on Monday! Oh! it makes me ill to think of it, and we cherished that viper as if she had been a child of our own."

"Grace may be a fool. Very likely she is. But I do not believe her to be a viper," said Miss Lucy stoutly. "It is a fortnight since she refused John. He told us so himself, and Lady Glendare could not then even have seen her."

"But she had seen Mr. Somerford."

"Well, girls, and which of you but might like to have a chance of setting her cap at an earl's nephew," observed the General. "In my opinion the Earl is a very unprincipled man, and the nephew but a sorry sort of fellow. Nevertheless, we must not be too hard upon Grace, though I think" (speaking very slowly and distinctly) "she has broken my heart."

And having so spoken—he, like his son, rose and left the room.

And all this time, though Kingslough was well aware that Miss Moffat had given Mr. John Riley his *congé*—though Kingslough and Glenwellan and Kilcurragh and many another place in addition were speculating concerning Mr. Somerford's chances of winning the heiress—concerning Miss Moffat's chances of wedding an extremely good-looking sprig of nobility—all this time, I say, Mr. Moffat remained in ignorance of his daughter's assertion of independence.

As has before been said, he was not hospitable. He disliked the customs of a country where every man had the run of his friends' tables. He did not visit anywhere unless solemnly and ceremoniously invited, and very seldom then, and he wanted no chance guests in a house the domestic routine of which might have been wound up and set going by clockwork.

Nevertheless he had been accustomed to see John Riley about the place—to meet him in the avenue, or on the terrace, or strolling through the grounds with Grace and Nettie,

and after a time it occurred to him that, spite of Lady Glendare's frequent presence, there was something or some one absent who had filled up a gap in his experience.

He thought the matter over with that curious thoroughness which is the attribute of slow and abstracted natures, and then said, "Grace, what has become of John? Is he from home? I have not seen him for more than a fortnight past."

For a moment Grace paused—then she said, very evenly, "I do not think you will see John Riley here again at present. He asked me to marry him, and I refused; that is the reason he has not visited Bayview for more than a fortnight past."

"But, my dear Grace—your mother——"

"My dear papa," interrupted Grace, "I deny the right of any mother, how much more the right of a mother who is dead, and who can know nothing of the feelings of the living, to select a husband for her child. It was all a mistake; and if mamma were alive, she would, I am sure, be the first to acknowledge it to be so."

"At your age, Grace," began Mr. Moffat.

"At my age, papa," once again interrupted Miss Grace, "it is of great importance to know one's own mind, and I have long known I would never marry John Riley."

"But remembering for how long a time it has been considered a settled matter that you and he were to become man and wife eventually, I think you ought at all events to have consulted me before rejecting him."

"I had not any time to consult you, papa," answered Miss Grace demurely, "it was just 'Yes' or 'No,' and I said 'No.' I never thought you really liked the Rileys," went on the girl, "and I do not see why I should marry John merely because my grandfather had a friendship for the General. I have always declared that I do not intend to leave you or Bayview," and she rubbed her cheek caressingly against his sleeve.

"Ah, Gracie, that is all very well *now*," said Mr. Moffat.

"It is all very well for ever, papa," she replied. "How should I learn to care for any other home than this? How should I endure such a life as that the girls lead at Woodbrook? If I am fastidious, papa, remember who has made me so. It is your own fault if I am as people say I am, proud and reserved; I, who have not, to quote some of the plain-

spoken Kingslough people, a desirable thing about me except my money."

"What does Mrs. Riley say to all this, Grace?" asked Mr. Moffat, totally ignoring his daughter's last sentence.

"I can only imagine," the girl replied. "Mrs. Riley and I have not seen each other since; I do not suppose we ever shall see each other again."

"Do you mean that because you have refused John, all intimacy between the families is to cease?" asked her father somewhat anxiously.

"I mean that as he has not been here for more than a fortnight, nor his sisters, nor his mother, nor his father, it is very likely they all intend to cut me—but I can bear it," finished Miss Grace with a toss of her pretty head.

"I had regarded this marriage as a settled thing," said Mr. Moffat thoughtfully.

"So did a great many other people, I believe," answered his daughter.

"When a girl has a large fortune," went on Mr. Moffat, "it becomes an anxious question whom she shall marry."

"I should have thought that an anxious question whether a girl have a fortune or not," Grace remarked.

"I am speaking seriously about a serious matter," replied her father in a tone of rebuke. "A portionless girl is at all events certain not to fall into the hands of a fortune-hunter. There is nothing I should have such a horror of as seeing a child of mine married to a mere adventurer. Till now I have never felt a moment's uneasiness about your future. The match proposed by your grandfather seemed in every respect suitable, and now, without even mentioning the subject to me, you have unsettled the plans of years. So independent a young lady as you aspire to be," he added bitterly, "will no doubt choose a husband with as much facility as you have discarded a suitor, and some day you will come to me and say, I have accepted Mr. So-and-so, with as much coolness as that with which you now tell me you have rejected John Riley."

"You are unkind, you are not fair to me," said Grace, who was by this time in tears. "I never thought you much liked the Rileys; you did not ask them to the house."

"No," interrupted Mr. Moffat, "I certainly did not encourage promiscuous visiting, because I like to feel my house and my time my own, and detest the practice of living

anywhere except at home, which prevails so much in this country. I am not a man who delights in general society, and I do not pretend to say the Rileys are congenial to my taste, but——"

"You think they ought to be to mine," said Grace, laughing even while she cried.

"I think they are a family with whom you might have got on extremely well," answered Mr. Moffat. "I think John Riley is a young man in whose hands any girl might safely put her happiness. There is no drawback I can see to him except the fact of his father's property being so heavily encumbered, and your money would have paid that mortgage off, and the estate might in my opinion then have been doubled in value. I have often thought how it might be managed."

"So have the Rileys I am quite sure," added Grace.

"I believe John's affection for you to be perfectly disinterested," said her father.

"Perhaps it may," she replied, "but the worst of being an heiress is, one never thinks anybody is disinterested."

"Do not talk in that manner, my dear, or you will make me wish Mr. Lane had never left you a shilling."

"I have often wished he had left it to those poor slaves he made it out of," answered Grace. "Papa, I am sick of money: I should like to feel, if it were only for an hour, that somebody cared for me for myself alone."

"I think many somebodies care for you alone," he remarked; "myself, for instance."

"You—yes of course; but then, you are nobody," she said, squeezing his hand.

"Thank you for that compliment. What say you then to Lady Glendare?"

"I do not know what to say, except that I am afraid I am getting horribly tired of her. I shall be so glad when this detestable election is over and her ladyship's bathing at an end. How she does hate the very sight of the water!" added Grace, laughing at the recollection of Lady Glendare's terror. "I asked her one day if she did not enjoy it, and she repeated the word 'Enjoy!' with a shudder more expressive than any form of speech could have been."

"Then you have no ambition to live amongst the nobility?" asked Mr. Moffat.

"No, I should dislike it as much as Lady Glendare does sea-bathing. She cannot feel more out of her element on the Lone Rock than I did at Rosemont."

"I am glad to hear it, Grace," said her father; "I do not think much good comes out of girls associating with those in a higher rank than themselves."

Conscious that this remark was capable of a more particular application than the speaker suspected, Grace hung down her head and made no answer. When next she spoke it was to say,—

"Papa, you are not angry—really angry, I mean, because I could not care for John?"

"I am not angry," he answered, "but I am sorry. Any person may want to steal you away now."

"But if I am not to be stolen?" she asked.

Mr. Moffat smiled gravely and said,—

"Ah! Grace, you do not know much about these matters yet—I wish you could have liked John. But there," he added, speaking more cheerfully, "perhaps you may change your mind, and marry him in spite of all this."

"No," she answered. "And if I wanted to marry him ever so much he would never ask me again—never."

"You think that, Grace?"

"I am certain of it—certain—positive. I did not refuse him nicely, papa, not at all as young ladies do in books; I was rude and said what I ought not to have said. He vexed me and I vexed him."

"I trust you did not express any idea of his being influenced by mercenary considerations," said Mr. Moffat sharply.

"Yes I did," confessed the girl penitently.

"Then, Grace, I am angry with you; I shall make a point of going over to Woodbrook, and apologizing to him for your rudeness. I would not for any consideration this had happened. I wonder how you could so far forget your own dignity as to insult a man who had done you the great honour of asking you to be his wife, for, whatever you may think, a man can confer no higher compliment on a woman than that."

The girl made no reply; she only withdrew her hand from her father's arm, and walked slowly away towards the house. That day Lady Glendare found Miss Moffat in an unusually lively mood. Never before had her ladyship heard Miss Moffat talk so much or so well.

"She really has something in her," decided the countess, "and Robert might do worse; besides Mrs. Somerford does not like her." For all of which reasons Lady Glendare determined to promote the match.

Meanwhile another and not an adverse influence was at work.

When Mr. Moffat arrived at Woodbrook, great were the expectations raised in the bosoms of Mrs. Riley and her daughters by his unlooked-for visit.

He had asked for Mr. John Riley, but the servant ushered him into the general sitting-room, where Mrs. Riley, surrounded by the Misses Riley, was engaged in works of industry.

"This is an unlooked-for pleasure," said that careworn matron, giving Mr. Moffat both her hands to shake, as though one would not have been more than enough to satisfy him. "We did not hope to see you here: I think it very kind of you to call, and to show us we are still to be friends, although it seems we are not to be relatives."

Mrs. Riley was not a favourite of Mr. Moffat's. He liked everything soft, and quiet, and graceful about a woman—voice, manner, mind, dress, movement. Mrs. Riley had a pronounced accent, and was neither quiet nor graceful; a good woman, no doubt, but one who would have made Lady Glendare shudder. She caused Mr. Moffat to draw back a little farther into his shell, as he answered,—

"No one can regret Grace's decision more than I," (then she has not changed her mind, thought Mrs. Riley). "It is usually an anxious thing for a widower to be left with a daughter, more especially if that daughter have a large fortune, but I never felt anxious about Grace until now. I was so certain your son would make her a good husband."

Yes, it was Mrs. Riley's opinion there were not many young men like John in the world, and she expressed it.

"But one cannot control a young girl's fancies," said Mr. Moffat, who felt vaguely that the virtues of his daughter seemed to be forgotten in Mrs. Riley's praises of her son.

"I am very sorry to hear you say so," said that lady, pursing up her lips, "very sorry for Grace's sake."

"Do you think I can *make* Grace like your son?" asked Mr. Moffat, a little hotly, misinterpreting her meaning, and considering Mr. Riley would at least gain as much advantage from the match as his daughter.

"Certainly not, Mr. Moffat, but it might be just possible to keep her from liking other people."

"If your remark contain any hidden meaning, I am stupid enough not to perceive it," said Mr. Moffat, answering her tone rather than her words.

"There is no hidden meaning so far as I am aware," replied the lady. "We know the reason why John——"

"Mamma," interposed Lucy entreatingly.

"Nonsense, child, don't dictate to me," said her mother angrily, while Mr. Moffat added,—

"Pardon me, Miss Lucy, but I think your mother is right. If she is aware of any reason for Grace's decision beyond those with which I am acquainted, I certainly ought not to be kept in ignorance of them."

"But it is only mamma's idea, and I do not believe there is anything in it; I do not, indeed," persisted Lucy.

"And pray how does it happen you are so much wiser than your elders?" asked Mrs. Riley snappishly. "The fact is this, Mr. Moffat; Grace refused John because she likes some one else better."

"And who is the some one?" asked the perplexed father.

"Mr. Robert Somerford," said Mrs. Riley, with slow triumph.

"Mr. Robert Somerford! you must be"——crazy, Mr. Moffat had nearly added, but he substituted "mistaken" for it. "Grace has not seen him half-a-dozen times in her life."

"That makes no difference," was the calm reply.

"I think it makes every difference," said Mr. Moffat. "Believe me, Mrs. Riley, you are quite mistaken about this matter."

"Perhaps so, but if you ask your daughter, I think you will find I am not mistaken."

"I should indeed be sorry to mention the subject to my daughter, and I hope no one else will," said Mr. Moffat rising. "I have not the least desire to put such a ridiculous idea into her mind. There is nothing I should have such a horror of, for her, as an unequal marriage. There is scarcely a man I know I should less desire to see her husband than Mr. Somerford. As you say John is at the stables, I will, if you will allow me, go to him. I entreat of you," he added earnestly, "not to harbour this delusion. I am certain Grace is not a girl to give her affec-

tions where they have not been asked, where they are not wanted."

"Oh, we shall say nothing," hastily replied Mrs. Riley, who had already imparted her views on the Somerford question under the seal of secrecy to at least half-a-dozen friends; "we have our own affairs to attend to, and find that sufficient, without meddling in the affairs of other people. I only wish the General was of my mind. What he can be thinking of to turn knight-errant at his time of life, I cannot imagine."

"Papa wants to see Nettie's 'marriage lines,' Mr. Moffat," said Lucy, noticing their visitor's perplexed expression, "that is all mamma means. John and he are going over to-day to Maryville to ask for a private view."

"You ought not to speak about such subjects at all, Lucy," said her mother; "certainly not in so flippant a manner."

"Girls are a great plague," sighed Mr. Moffat. Whether his remark had any reference to Miss Lucy's flippancy it is difficult to say.

"Mine are not," said materfamilias, proudly.

"The present company is always excepted," answered Mr. Moffat, mentally adding, as he left the room, "not that I should except you from being one of the most ill-bred women I ever met. Perhaps, after all, Gracie has done wisely. I doubt whether she and Mrs. Riley could ever have gone on smoothly together."

In the stable-yard he met John, whose face brightened at sight of Grace's father, and then became once again overcast when he found Mr. Moffat had only called to apologize for his daughter's rudeness.

"Thank you," the young man said, simply. "Grace did not mean to hurt me, I am certain, but there was just enough truth in her words to sting and to rankle. You know, sir," he went on, "we are poor, and a man who is poor cannot help thinking about money; but it is not for her money's sake I love Grace. Some day she will know that, perhaps. When I am gone quite away, I wish you would tell her she could not be any dearer to me if she had millions, nor less dear if she had not a penny."

"Are you going away, then?"

"Yes, whenever the election is over, I shall leave Ireland. If Grace had said 'yes,' I should have left it all the same,

only with a lighter heart. I did not want her to marry a pauper. I meant to do something. I meant somehow to make a name and money; but why should I trouble you with all this?" and he broke off abruptly. The past had been fair, but it was dead and cold. The mental refrain of every sentence was, "Never more." For ever he should love her, never she would love him; that was the burden of that weary song he had kept repeating to himself ever since the night when he left her standing on the terrace, listening to the moan of the sea.

They walked on together in silence down the back avenue to a pair of rusty gates, outside of which Mr. Moffat had left his dog-cart.

"John," asked that gentleman abruptly, at length, "what is it your mother means about Mr. Somerford?"

"What about him?" said John moodily.

"She seems to think Grace is fond of him."

"So she is," was the reply.

"I am certain you are wrong."

"I am certain I am right; listen to me, sir. I do not say Grace is in love with the fellow, heaven forbid; but still, I do say he has, to use a common expression, 'put her out of conceit' with every one else. I am glad you have mentioned the matter, because I can now explain how Grace happened to be so spiteful to me. I expected to be refused, and yet I grew half-crazy with rage and jealousy when I was refused. So like a fool, I told her the new love had ousted out the old, and then, when she said I was mad to think Lord Glendare's nephew would ever want to marry her, I retorted that he might like to marry her money. The fault was mine, you see," finished the young man hurriedly. "Grace was not to blame, and I should have been the one to apologize, not you."

"What makes you suppose there is anything between Mr. Somerford and Grace?" that was the one question of absorbing interest to Mr. Moffat.

"I do not suppose there is anything," answered the young man. "All I mean is, that with his singing and playing, his handsome face and his soft, false manners, he has taken her fancy."

"That will all pass away," said Mr. Moffat, but John shook his head.

"If she could know him as he really is," answered

the young man, "know him for a cold, shallow, selfish, unprincipled vagabond, there might be some hope; but Grace has made a hero of him. She thinks he is without reproach, that he is predestined to retrieve the Glendare fortunes, that he is the one good fruit of a rotten tree. There, I would rather say no more about him. Perhaps I am unjust. For her sake I hope I am. I will come over to bid you and her good-bye before I go. Though we parted in anger, I think she would like to remember we parted once again as friends."

"Yes, you may be positive about that," Mr. Moffat assured him, and then they shook hands and separated, John to proceed to Maryville, and Grace's father to return to Bayview, a much more perplexed and harassed man than he had left it.

Was Mr. Somerford the origin of Lady Glendare's sudden intimacy with and professed affection for his daughter? He had said, and said truly, to Mrs. Riley, that he had a horror of unequal marriages, and that Robert Somerford was not a man to whom he should like to give his daughter; and yet, when he came to consider the matter calmly, when he found his objections to the young man were based greatly on prejudice, he began to see the match was not in reality so unequal as he had at first thought.

Grace was a gentlewoman, possessed of a large fortune, Mr. Somerford was the nephew of an earl, and had not a sixpence; so far the beam stood tolerably even. No one had ever spoken of Mr. Somerford as a rake, or a gambler, or a drunkard. His sins were those of omission. So far as Mr. Moffat was aware, no sins of commission had ever been charged against him. The poorer classes idolized him, and Mr. Moffat did not know enough of the lower classes to be able to judge accurately of the value of that idolatry.

Living entirely amongst his books, mixing little with society, as much a stranger to the feelings and habits of the country as the day he settled at Bayview, Irish only by connexion and marriage, Northumbrian by birth, English by feeling, wealthy by a sequence of unlooked-for events, indolent, refined, reserved, how should he, who had never been able to win for himself popularity, understand the utter worthlessness of the beads, and feathers, and gew-gaws of manner, and word, and presence, by which popularity is to be bought?

The Glendares were a weak, dissolute, extravagant, heartless race ; but then Mrs. Somerford, Robert's mother, was a very dragon of piety, respectability, pride, and austerity; and after all, if Grace's fortune were settled strictly on herself and her children, she might do worse.

Hitherto, he had always looked upon Grace as virtually married to John Riley, and it was therefore a shock and a wrench to imagine her married to any one else; but if Grace did not like John, and did like Lord Glendare's nephew, why then Mr. Moffat decided he would try to accustom himself to the change.

After all, Lady Glendare and Mrs. Somerford would be more desirable relatives than poor, bustling, well-meaning, loud-voiced, many-daughtered Mrs. Riley.

Further, Grace must marry and that soon. Those were days, as has been already stated, when girls sooner outgrew their first youth than women do now, and Mr. Moffat disliked beyond all description the idea of having, as he mentally expressed it, "a score of lovers hanging about Bayview."

The charge of a young maiden, the trouble of keeping undesirable admirers at bay, love complications, secret engagements, scenes, tears, loss of appetite, and threatened consumption, all these things were as much beyond Mr. Moffat's province as they were outside his taste.

He loved ease and the classics, he detested company, he hated having the even tenor of his life ruffled even for a moment by the intrusion of an outside current.

He had been vexed with Grace, and sorry for John Riley, but now he believed John would get over it, and perhaps it was quite as well Mrs. Riley should not become his daughter's mother-in-law.

Mrs. Riley's voice had that day sounded especially disagreeable. The bitterness, disappointment, and resentment she feared to express had not added to its sweetness, and had added to the brusqueness of her manner.

After the sweetness of Lady Glendare, the acid of Mrs. Riley had not appeared good to Mrs. Moffat. How handsome her ladyship still remained, how exquisitely she dressed! The fashions of those days seem astonishing to us, but they were the mode then, and people admired them accordingly. How gracefully she moved! As Robert Somerford said, "there was poetry in her walk." On the other hand, what

a dowdy Mrs. Riley looked, with her crushed cap and faded strings, her ill-made dress, and yellow bony hands.

A long course of mortgage had not tended to improve Mrs. Riley's personal appearance. She looked like a house in Chancery. Every time he beheld her, Mr. Moffat beheld likewise fresh dilapidations and—

"Jerry," said Mr. Moffat at this juncture, suddenly roused from ideal musings to a sense of the real; "see what is the matter with Finn's front off foot. He is easing it."

Mr. Moffat was driving tandem, and his leader's foot was slightly beyond his range of accurate vision.

"Cast a shoe, your honour," explained Jerry, lifting the foot indicated.

"That is bad, what can we do?"

"I'll walk him home," volunteered the groom.

"No, I cannot endure driving alone. Cannot we put him up somewhere?"

"Amos Scott would take good care of him. His place is at the top of the next loanin."*

"You mean Miss Grace's friend, the man who has a lame boy, and who wears a blue coat with brass buttons?"

"Yes, your honour."

"Open the gates then, and I will drive up."

"There are half-a-dozen gates."

"Walk on then and open them all. What a cursed country!" thought Mr. Moffat as his wheels went down on one side and up on the other, and his horses gingerly picked their way over huge stones, and gravel, and pieces of rock. "Jerry, does Scott draw his farm produce down this charming piece of road?"

"Every ton of it, sir."

"And his manure back?"

"Ah, it's little manure he draws. He has his own heap always rotting at the door, ready to his hand, and it's good land he has, God bless it."

"Who is supposed to keep this road in repair?" asked Mr. Moffat, unheeding this testimony to Mr. Scott's admirable management, and the superior quality of his soil.

"Nobody, sir."

"Who does it belong to?"

"Nobody, sir; it is a divisional, and nobody can stop it,

* Lane.

and nobody cares to mend it. In the winter there is a fine stream running sometimes ; I've seen it in flood times up to the horse's girths."

"Who is the landlord ?"

"The Earl, sir."

There was only one earl known at Kingslough, his rival being the Marquis.

"If he knew the state this road was in he would have something done to it, I should think," said Mr. Moffat.

"Likely, sir, but it was always so," remarked the man.

"Always so, always so," repeated Mr. Moffat to himself, "ay, and everything always will be so while Ireland is Ireland, and the Irish remain Irish," forgetting that he, an Englishman, had fallen into Irish ways ; that the grass on his lawns was suffered to grow long like that in a meadow ; that his hedges and borders were unclipped ; that his walks were unrolled, and his grounds, though beautiful exceedingly, were left in a state which would have driven an English gardener crazy to behold.

Yes, he was Irish in his ways, without the Irishman's excuse, for he had plenty of money, plenty and to spare. He might have given employment to many and many a labourer, had he transplanted the trim civilization of his native land across the Channel.

If a man have wealth and do not spend it, he may as well be an absentee as a resident. Some idea of this truth had already dawned upon Grace Moffat. All the evils Ireland groaned under she heard ascribed to non-resident landlords, to the rent the land yielded being spent out of the country ; but the girl, thanks perhaps to the comparatively lonely life she led, and to her intense love for and sympathy with the people, was beginning to understand that non-residence was only a part of the evil.

For example, she and her father lived at Bayview ; but for all the money they spent, or good they did in Ireland, they might as well have lived at Jericho. The Rileys again, who was the better for their presence ? They lived off the soil ; they killed their own sheep, they ate their own poultry, they grew their own vegetables, they wore the same clothes, so it seemed to Grace, month after month, and year after year. All this certainly might be their misfortune, indeed Miss Moffat knew no choice was left to them in the matter ; but the man who held the mortgage on their property, and

for whose sake the Woodbrook tenants groaned under a yoke scarcely less severe than that laid upon the necks of the farmers who rented lands from the Glendares, lived at Kilcurragh alone, with an aged servant, in a large dilapidated house, giving nothing away, living upon as little as he could.

If he expended a hundred a year, it was the extent of his outgoings.

Then Grace thought about Mrs. Hartley. She, though English, resided in a land where the exigencies of society did not require a large expenditure of money, and accordingly Mrs. Hartley did not live up to her income; did not, in fact, use a fourth of it.

The poor, Miss Moffat could not fail to see, were the real benefactors of their country. They gave their labour, and out of their poverty they were liberal; they gave the ready handful of meal, the bannock of griddle bread, the sieve-full of potatoes, the drink of milk, the abundance of their sympathy, the cheerful courtesy of their manners, the smiling promptitude of their charity; and Grace, who was a little shy, whom neither the lower nor the higher classes exactly understood, seeing everything, laid it to heart, and made a trembling vow that when she came to her own, when she attained the advanced age of one-and-twenty, she would try to use her wealth aright, and see whether even a woman might not do something to regenerate the country she loved so dearly.

If Mr. Moffat had ever entertained any romantic ideas of the same description, they were dead and buried years before this story opens.

Taking the world round, no matter how many persons a man begins with being attached to, he generally ends in liking himself better than any of them.

To this rule Mr. Moffat proved no exception. Grace and himself now formed the only prominent figures in his life's design, and at that time Grace stood a little behind himself.

Not a bad man, not a dishonourable, but yet he buried his talent in the ground, and returned no interest for all wherewith his Lord had trusted him.

The people, by which phrase I mean those whose rank was socially lower than his own, liked him very well indeed.

He was a "foreigner," and consequently could not be supposed to understand their ways; but they found him always civil. He was a "gentleman," if a very quiet one.

He rarely addressed them, but when he did, "he was civil and well-spoken."

"He never made free." On the whole, Mr. Moffat was popular, allowances being readily made for his love of books and solitude.

Specially he was liked amongst the Glendare tenantry. Once or twice he had spoken to the "Aggent," as Mr. Dillwyn was generally styled, and effected good by his mild interference.

With beaming face, Mrs. Scott, a middle-aged woman, whose face was framed in the universal white frilled cap, and who wore a blue-checked apron, came out to meet him.

"Is your husband at home, Mrs. Scott?" asked her visitor.

"No, sir; he has gone to Rosemont, to see th' Airl. We'll get our lease promised now, plaize God."

"My leader has cast a shoe," explained Mr. Moffat. "May I leave him here for an hour or two?"

'An' welcome, sir; shall I unloose him?"

"You, Mrs. Scott! certainly not; Jerry can attend to him. There, easy man, easy. Mind how you pull off that bridle."

Afterwards it occurred to Mr. Moffat, with a feeling as near remorse as he was capable of experiencing, that if he had not been quite so wrapped up that summer's day in himself and his leader, he might have uttered a word of warning to the farmer's hard-working wife.

They were as innocent as children of the world's ways, those men and those women, and happy as children in their innocence, till they had to pay the penalty of such ignorance.

CHAPTER IX.

AT THE CASTLE FARM.

Amongst his friends and acquaintances Amos Scott's homestead was considered a marvel of convenience and luxury, whilst by gentle and simple alike Mr. Scott himself was regarded as a very fortunate man—one with whom the world had prospered exceedingly. As his neighbours expressed his lot, "He was born on a sunny morning," and the sunshine

had through forty years scarcely ever been obscured by a cloud.

He farmed the land his fathers had farmed before him. He married the woman of his choice, and that woman chanced to have a stocking full of money to her dowry ; his children—all save one Reuben—were strong, straight, healthy; he was respected and well liked by his equals, his superiors, and his inferiors. He paid for his two sittings at the Presbyterian Meeting-house, and the minister drank tea with him and his wife thrice a year at all events. The murrain had left his cattle untouched; all his children, old enough to have sounded such depths of knowledge, could read and write. Reuben, indeed, thanks to Grace Moffat, boasted a much wider range of learning. He was the "scholard" of the family, and the family entertained an openly-expressed expectation that some day—thanks again to Miss Gracie—he would be a schoolmaster, and a secret hope that, thanks to his own abilities and the still not to be despised contents of the typical stocking, he might enter the ministry.

It was entirely as a social question, as a matter of rising in the world, that Amos Scott desired this result. To him the ministry merely represented a body of men who taught the same creed as that he believed, and who, not labouring with their hands, filled a better position than any mere farmer might hope to occupy. He, Amos Scott, was too staunch a Presbyterian to regard the clergy from any superstitious or popish point of view. He always considered himself and men like him as true descendants of the seven thousand who refused to bow their knee to Baal—who, being certainly of the elect, nevertheless threw good works in to swell the credit of the account their faith had previously balanced—and he and the thousands of his fellows who at that time doggedly, and bigotedly, and unchristianly, as it may seem, entered their daily protest against Popery, as surely—from a political point of view—stood between their country and destruction as the Derry Apprentices saved Ireland to England.

Whether Ireland was grateful, or England is grateful, history alone can decide. When that history which has still to be written is published, the staunch and sturdy Presbyterians of the Black North may possibly receive their due meed of praise; but staunch and sturdy people, who hold

strong opinions, and like exhibiting them to the world, are apt sometimes to be voted bores, both by those who differ from them and those who are indifferent to everything, and it is very possibly for this reason, and no better one, that statesmen and peacemakers, and those who consider the Roman Catholic religion "picturesque," and suited to the "Celtic nature," and adapted to afford comfort and happiness to "poor, warm-hearted, enthusiastic persons," have all considered, and do all consider the stiff-necked Protestantism of the Irish minority—powerful, though a minority—one of the chief causes of the "Irish difficulty."

Certainly, in the North, at the time of which I write, the Roman Catholics had but a poor life.

What with the favourite form of drunken expletive which consigned the Pope to regions hot and gloomy; what with party tunes, Orange processions, and that which is hardest perhaps, of all to bear, the visiting the sins of a system on individuals, and assuming them capable of any crime merely because they belonged to a special church, it was not easy for "Papists," as the rival sects loved to style Roman Catholics, to order their course aright.

They were the few amongst the many in the North. In the South the tables were turned, and Protestants did not find it easy to please the warm-hearted peasantry, who had then, as now, a fancy for cold lead and firing from behind hedges.

But it is with the North we are concerned, with Ulster when the Church as by law established stood much in the position of Saul. She counted her thousands, but Calvin his tens of thousands. Nineteen-twentieths of the people went to "Meeting." I should like to see the man who to this day dare call a "Meeting-house" "Chapel" in Ulster. They were a hard, stubborn, honest people, who kept the Lord's Day with an almost New England strictness, who prayed to the Lord standing, and who sang His praises sitting, and who were, it should please almost any people to imagine, a race the Lord Himself, Who knows all hearts, might have loved, so keen was their sense of duty, their feeling of responsibility, their love of justice, their respect for appointed powers.

To men accustomed to more artificial society, their manners might seem a trifle brusque, their words too plain to be always pleasant; but underneath a rough exterior, hearts beat leal and noble.

Here and there, not at long intervals, but within any one human being's ken, might have been picked out men and women capable of as noble deeds, of as grand sacrifices, as any which are deemed worthy of being chronicled in romance, and one of those men was Amos Scott, and one of those women was his wife.

At any hour of the day or night had Grace Moffat tapped at their door, and said,—

"We are in sore trouble, we want all the help you can give," without a second thought, though they were a close-fisted pair, sparing on themselves, devoted to bargains, given to haggling about half-pence—the contents of the magical stocking would have been poured into her lap, and had need occurred Amos would have threshed out his corn, and sold his cows, and parted with his pigs, and handed the proceeds to the young lady, with as little thought of having acted with marvellous generosity as a child, in as fine a spirit of chivalry as moved those poor, weather-beaten fishermen who, some seventy years ago, rowed a gallant gentleman—gallant, if mistaken—out of sight of land, and then, resting on their oars, pulled forth the paper offering one thousand pounds reward for their passenger, and asked him if he "knew anybody answering that description." He had thought his disguise perfect, fancied himself safe in it, and behold his whole safety lay and had lain in the honour of those men who were carrying him to the sloop destined to bear one most unfortunate to France and liberty.

And yet to look at Amos Scott and his wife was to destroy the idea of all romance in connexion with them. Hearty and healthy were they both: strong, bony, large-framed, hard-featured. He had been a ruddy-complexioned, bashful, fair-haired gossoon when he first beheld his future wife, the buxom, strapping daughter of a village innkeeper. Dark brown was her hair in those days, thick and long enough to twine in ropes round the back of her head; dark brown, also, were her eyes, and she had a large, frank mouth, and large white even teeth, and a complexion delicate, and clear, and beautiful, like most other girls of her nation; but the years had come and gone since then, and the "gossoon" was a middle-aged man, and his wife's hair tucked away under one of those caps which cease to be picturesque when once the starch is out of them, and she had wrinkles after the manner of her class—everywhere—and she had lost some of

her teeth, and her voice was—well—I love the accent, the honest, friendly accent of the lower classes in that romantic, and picturesque, and sorrowful land; but Mr. Moffat, being an Englishman, though partially acclimatized, did not admire it any more than he admired the dung-heap—graced with a sow and a dozen young ones—that rose to the left hand of the "causeway," or the sodden, rotten straw, wherein were scratching and pecking some thirty fowls, that lay to the right of the said causeway, marking the spot whence a previous midden had been removed.

"Won't you come in, sir, and sit down off your feet?" asked Mrs. Scott hospitably, anxious to show a gentleman, whose nature she did not in the least understand, all the hospitality in her power; but Mr. Moffat, with a gesture almost of dread, declined the proffered civility.

Once had he been seduced into that abode, once by Grace, and he always thought afterwards, with horror, of the sufferings endured within the walls of Mr. Scott's mansion.

Cheese had been produced for their delectation,—cheese, a species of food Mr. Moffat, being a man of weak digestion and given to considering his ailments, loathed. Further, it was new cheese, such as the Irish eat at births and funerals (washing it down with whisky), new cheese, dotted with caraway seeds, and with this Mrs. Scott set out oaten bread, and butter fresh and good, but butter made with Mrs. Scott's own hands, which did not look inviting, and butter-milk and sweet-milk: and he was expected to eat.

If Mr. Moffat were not genial, and I am not aware his worst enemy ever laid that virtue in the form of a vice to his charge, at all events he was courteous. The feast was spread so humbly and so willingly, and with such a simple hospitality and belief that because it chanced to be the best the house held it would be received kindly, that Mr. Moffat could not choose but break a piece off the oat cake and eat it.

"Do you know poor papa can scarcely ever touch butter and *never* eats cheese," said Grace to Mrs. Scott, gaily helping herself to a great piece of cake and an enormous slice of butter, "and you know I do not like caraways—you always make my cheese without them," which speech contained an allusion to the fact of its being Mrs. Scott's annual custom to present Miss Moffat with a cheese of her own manufacture.

Great were the ceremonies attendant on that presentation, which was always performed by Mrs. Scott in person, and

the cheese invariably proved remarkably good. Perhaps, had Grace beheld the *modus operandi* of its manufacture, she might not have regarded the article as a delicacy, for all Mrs. Scott's progeny assisted at the tub, and little hands, not so clean as might have been desired, dabbled in the whey.

What the eye does not see, the heart, however, does not grieve over, and Ireland is not the only country in which mothers, impressed by a fatal delusion that their offspring can touch nothing without improving it, permit children to meddle with and dabble in affairs more important than the separation of curd from whey.

As for those youngsters at the Tower Farm, Grace loved them every one. All the later babies she had nursed and cooed over. One of them was called after her, Grace Moffat Scott, and had it been possible for such a suggestion to be made to the Presbyterian mind, she would gladly have stood godmother to the new arrival.

As it was, Amos Scott's convictions saved her from assuming any such responsibility, and Miss Moffat, thus debarred from any public evidence of affection, had to content herself with fondling the infant so long as it was little, and tossing it up to the ceiling the while it cooed and shrieked an ecstatic accompaniment, and letting it, as age advanced, come like the rest to see what she had in her pockets, what "comforts and lozengers" were there lying *perdu* for subsequent delectation.

Often on Saturdays Nettie O'Hara and she had made up a picnic party all by themselves, and taking their luncheon with them, so as to alleviate the pangs of hunger, held high festival among the ruins of the tower which gave a name to Amos Scott's farm.

Dear to Grace was every inch of that farm, one of the delights of her childhood had been to accompany her nurse thither. There were not so many importunate urchins then to claim Mrs. Scott's attention, and every moment of her time could therefore be devoted to her little lady guest.

For her—the motherless, black-frocked, grave, old-fashioned orphan—were saved the reddest and sunniest apples in the orchard; for her was baked the first "bannock" that could be manufactured out of new potatoes; for her always was kept a comb of honey; for her the "strippings" from the best cow, which Grace, who was warned at home that new milk "would make her yellow," regarded in the light of a for-

bidden indulgence, and drank rapturously out of the lid of a tin can; for her, surreptitious rides on Pat, the donkey, and Rob, the venerable black pony, over whose decease she subsequently wept bitter tears; for her a hundred thousand welcomes; for her the best that house held, while she was still so little as to be unable to guess how much out of their small means these people were giving her, how royally in their own poor way they were entertaining a child who it seemed scarcely likely would ever directly or indirectly benefit them in any way.

Not out of interested motives, however, did they welcome the little maiden; not because of any return they looked for did they welcome her to the farm, and make her free of house and byre, of stable, garden, orchard, and paddock. In those early days they wanted nothing from any one: in the latter days, when we make their acquaintance, they still wanted nothing from any one save a renewal of their still unexpired lease from Lord Glendare, and for that they were willing and able to pay. The rent had never yet been more than a temporary trouble to Amos Scott. The land was exceptionally good. The amount he paid for it exceptionally low. Stiff premiums had indeed twice been paid by Amos and his father, but they were able to afford them.

There is a great deal in "starting square." They had done so, and by dint of prudence, economy, and hard labour, were enabled to keep themselves that ten pounds before the world which means affluence, instead of that ten pounds behind which means perpetual pauperism.

And for these reasons and many more, had Grace been thrice the heiress she was, and of age, and holding her whole fortune in her own hand, it would have made no difference (pecuniarily) to the Scotts. They did not want gifts or loans, they could earn as much as they needed and desired, indeed, would have accepted nothing more. They could pay for their children's schooling, and spared them to go to school except in the very height of hay-making, reaping, or potato-digging. Had Miss Moffat or her father offered to be at the sole expense of educating one of the children, they would have resented the idea almost as an insult, but when Grace, in her own quiet way, proposed to do a still greater thing, namely, teach the feeble one of the flock all that she knew herself, the parents caught at the notion; and the girl herself, still almost a child, gave her lessons with a

sweet patience, with a determined perseverance, with a thoroughness and kindly encouragement Nettie O'Hara might have envied.

But she did nothing of the kind; she only laughed at Gracie's fancy for playing at schoolmistress.

"You can't think, dear, how much I learn myself in teaching him," said Grace, not in the least disturbed by her friend's ridicule.

Once again Nettie laughed.

"If I had your fortune, I should not care how little I knew."

"You would like to know how to spend it, though," said Grace, with a pretty sense of responsibility.

"Oh! somebody else will do that for you."

"Never," answered Grace, "never; Nettie, how often am I to tell you no one shall ever persuade me to leave Bayview and papa?"

"But your papa will spend it for you," said Nettie, hastily drawing back her foot from the conversational hole into which she had unwittingly thrust it.

Now came Grace's turn to laugh.

"Dear papa does not know how to spend his own," she exclaimed; "and perhaps when I have money, I shall know as little what to do with it as he. But oh! Nettie, I hope I shall learn; I am trying so hard to understand what is wanted most in this world."

"Money for everybody, I think," Nettie retorted, a little bitterly. After all, the difference was great between the embryo heiress and the embryo governess. Perhaps Grace felt it to be so, for she embraced her friend tenderly, and Nettie certainly saw the distinction clearly, and attributed to it results that did not always accrue from the premises she imagined.

For instance, she always fancied the welcome to Castle Farm was more cordial to Grace than to herself, because Grace had money and she had none; whereas the Scotts would have greeted Grace the same had she not owned a stiver, and liked Nettie even less than was the case, had some benevolent person left her ten thousand a year.

Wonderfully quick are the wisest of the lower orders all the world over at reading character; shrewd even beyond their class are the Irish, and more especially the northern Irish, in detecting the faintest token of a false ring in the human coin. And, spite of her beauty, which had won such

golden opinions from the gentlemen and ladies of Kingslough—both being for once unanimous in the matter—the Scotts thought it was a pity "Miss Grace was so wrapt up in that Miss Nettie."

Nevertheless, in their own way, both husband and wife were unaffectedly grieved when they heard of the trouble Nettie had wrought for herself, and it was with subdued voice and grave face that Mrs. Scott said to her chance visitor, while Jerry took that "contrary divil Finn," as he styled him, into the stable,—

"Miss Grace 'll have heard, sir, that Miss Nettie—Mrs. Brady, begging her pardon, has come home."

"I do not think she has," answered Mr. Moffat, with a sudden repression of manner which did not escape Mrs. Scott's notice. "When did she come? where is she?"

"Where should she be, sir, but in her husband's house?—bad luck to him—that's where she is; and as for when she come home, I was over at my cousin's two days ago—she's in great trouble, having just buried her husband, the Lord help her, and nine children to fill and to find—and as I was coming home through the gloaming I met them on the car, Mr. Dan driving. He nodded to me and gave me the time of day. They were walking the horse down the Abbey brae, but she had her face covered with a veil, and looked neither one way nor another. I thought to myself, 'that's a coming home for an O'Hara.' She has made a rough bed for herself to lie on, and a purty creature, too."

"Mrs. Scott," said Mr. Moffat, "I wish you would answer me one question straightforwardly and in confidence, entirely in confidence you understand. What is this man Brady? what has he done, what has he left undone, to have such a mark placed against his name? As you are aware, I do not put myself in the way of hearing idle gossip; I disapprove of people who are never happy except when meddling in their neighbours' business, but you know how it was with my little girl and Miss O'Hara—and——"

"God bless Miss Grace, she'll want to be running off after Miss Nettie the minute she hears of her home-coming; but don't let her, sir, don't. Miss Nettie has made her bed, and neither man nor woman can help her to unmake it now, and don't let Miss Grace try to meddle or to make. Don't put it in anybody's power to say Dan Brady ever spoke a word to her, or she to him.

"Yes—yes, my good woman," interposed Mr. Moffat testily, "I know all that, I know everybody is in the same story about Mr. Daniel Brady, but what I want to hear is, what has he done? Why do the well-educated and highly-civilized population of Kingslough denounce this really decidedly goodlooking and rather well-mannered young man, as though he were a sinner past redemption? What has the man done?"

"Is it about Brady, sir, ye're asking that question," joined in a male voice at this juncture; and, looking round, Mr. Moffat beheld Amos Scott, who had just returned home. "If so be it is, I'll make free to answer it myself? What has he done? what hasn't he done, except what it was his right to do? that is more to the point. They say he forged his grandfather's will; he broke his mother's heart; he had a grudge against a man, and swore that about him which sent him beyond the seas; he has always the best of a bargain; ay, and there's not a father in the county whose heart hadn't need to be sore if he saw one of his girls even say, 'Good mornin', to Daniel Brady."

"That's it, is it?" commented Mr. Moffat, briefly. He knew enough of the people he lived among to understand the full significance of the latter part of Mr. Scott's sentence. Parents had as a rule sufficient faith in their daughters to leave them to take care of themselves, and as a rule their daughters justified the trust reposed in them. Nevertheless girls were sometimes deceived, and the man who made it his occupation to lure them to "misfortune," so the tender phrase went, was not likely to receive much toleration at the hands of the masses.

In a country like Ireland, where women have an exceptional liberty of action, speech, and manner—a liberty unknown even in England—it is natural that fathers, brothers, and husbands should resist the smallest encroachment on such freedom; should cast a libertine out from familiar intercourse with their families as though he were a leper.

If a man was bad let him consort with bad company, and refrain from bringing social and moral destruction into decent houses.

Mr. Daniel was bad and had consorted with bad company, and no respectable man cared to have much intimate acquaintance with him; and to his other sins he had now

added the offence of having run off with a very lovely and pretty girl.

For that offence, however, Mr. Moffat felt no desire to quarrel with him. On the whole, he was perhaps rather pleased than otherwise that Nettie had chosen for her husband one whose position and character rendered further acquaintance between her and his daughter impossible.

Nettie had been as great a pest to him as it was possible for a young girl to prove to an elderly gentleman who spent much of his time in his library. It would be absurd to say that he grudged the preserves, and biscuits, and milk, the tea, and the bread and butter, wherewith Grace was wont to entertain her friend, but he did dislike Nettie's perpetual presence. Golden curls, blue eyes, pink and white cheeks, did not make up his ideal of feminine perfection, and had he admired and liked Nettie ever so much, and he neither particularly liked nor admired her, it would still have been a burden and a weariness to him to see her so perpetually about the house.

To him she appeared as obnoxious and strange a visitor to have constantly hovering round the premises as a strange cat prowling over his flower-beds seems to a careful gardener.

He had never hoped to get completely rid of her, and yet, lo! in a moment, Mr. Brady had procured his deliverance. On the whole, therefore, Mr. Moffat was not disposed to judge Mr. Brady severely. Perhaps, on the whole, he felt pleased to think his code of morals was objectionable; possibly he did not fret because Mr. Brady had placed himself, and, as a matter of course, his wife, out of the pale of decent society.

Miss Nettie had chosen, and for the future Bayview would be free of that young lady at all events.

Such were the thoughts that passed through Mr. Moffat's mind while Amos Scott continued a rambling tirade against Mr. Brady and his sins of omission and commission.

"You must have been away betimes this morning," he remarked at length, feeling it would be only civil before he went to refer to some matter personal to his host.

"No, sir, I met th' Airl a couple of miles on the other side of Kingslough, and would you please to tell Miss Grace it is all right? he has promised me the new lease."

"You will have to pay for it, though, I suppose," answered Mr. Moffat.

"Yes, sir; but thank God we have a pound or two to the fore, and we would rather pinch a bit, if need was, than leave th' ould place."

"That is natural," remarked Mr. Moffat; and then, his leader having been comfortably disposed of by Jerry, he bade good-day to Mr. and Mrs. Scott, and slowly retraced his way to the main road, muttering maledictions against the "divisional" as he went.

CHAPTER X.

MR. DANIEL BRADY RECEIVES.

At one time, a pernicious habit obtained across the channel, a habit which unfortunately appears to have latterly been imported into England, of bestowing Christian names on country-seats. A son, fond of his mother, bought a property possessed of some old Irish cognomen, and forthwith the place became Kittymount, or Hannah Ville, or Jinny Brook, or St. Margaret's. Sometimes men also came in for their share of this delicate attention, and Robertsford, and Williamsford, and Mount George, or Knock Denis, perpetuated the name of some favoured member of the race.

To this custom Maryville, the seat of Mr. Daniel Brady, owed its nomenclature.

A certain heiress, in the days when the Bradys owned a considerable amount of property, married a younger son of that family.

With her money a small estate, on which stood an unpretending cottage residence, was purchased, a large house erected, a park fenced in, gardens laid out, lodge and lodge-entrance provided, and then Mr. and Mrs. Theophilus Brady took up their abode at Maryville.

Acre after acre the principal estate changed hands; one by one the older branches of the family died out. My Lord Ardmorne owned all the broad lands that had once belonged to the old Bradys, but Maryville still remained to the descendants of Theophilus. The porter's lodge was in ruins, the gates hanging on one hinge stood wide, the park was a wilderness, in the gardens weeds grew knee-deep, and the currant and gooseberry trees were smothered with bind-weed and convolvulus.

As for the house, a few of the rooms were habitable, and these Mr. Daniel Brady occupied. He lived there all alone, in company with an elderly housekeeper, whose age and looks were sufficient guarantee for her propriety; lived there, a man at war with society, a man who was at feud with the world, a man who said he was determined some day to get the better of society, and make those who had once snubbed him glad of his company.

"It is all a question of money," he said openly. "If they thought I was rich, they would be glad enough to ask me to their houses, hang them."

However great a cad a man may be, it is extremely unlikely he should acknowledge the fact, even to himself. Indeed, he is always the only person who remains entirely unconscious of the circumstance, and therefore, although Mr. Brady was aware that for a considerable period those of his race who had preceded him had found themselves neglected by the upper ten of Kingslough and its neighbourhood, that for generations his people had dropped out of the rank of gentry, and that his own existence was virtually tabooed by persons who made the slightest pretension to respectability; still he persisted this social ostracism originated in circumstances entirely independent of character; that the Bradys had gone down, not because they were, in their humbler way, as bad, and wild, and reckless, and selfish, and self-willed as the Glendares, but because his great-grandfather had married a shopkeeper's daughter, and his aunt had elected to go off with the particularly handsome son of a small farmer, who was no higher in rank than a labourer, while his mother, sick, doubtless of the Bradys and people like them, chose for her second husband an Englishman who made her comfortable, though he did drop his h's, and whose connexion with himself Mr. Daniel utterly repudiated.

After her marriage, the youth, then in his very early teens, was taken by his maternal grandfather, who, spite of wars and rumours of wars, spite of various threats expressive of an intention to kick his grandson out of his house, spite of the contempt he felt for "that cur," as he habitually designated Daniel, left to that young man everything of which he died possessed, and passing by his daughter, devised and bequeathed his small corn-mill, his farm, held at an almost nominal rent for a long term, his

furniture, his horses, and his blessing to the youthful reprobate.

No one ever believed Mr. Farrell signed that will knowing its contents. Most people went so far as to believe he never signed it at all, and amongst the latter number was included the heir's mother. This idea and a stormy interview with her first-born were the proximate causes of her death. She had three children by her second marriage, and counted no doubt on inheriting the greater portion of her father's property, which in turn she would be able to bequeath to them. From the day of Mr. Farrell's funeral, she never held up her head. Gradually she drooped, and pined, and died of a broken heart, that disease which doctors try to diagnose in vain.

Clear of all relations, possessed of a sum of money which, if really small, seemed comparatively large to a man whose family had for so long a time been drifting in a rotten boat along the river of incapable expenditure to the river of ruin, Mr. Daniel Brady removed his grandfather's furniture to Maryville, which had long stood empty, gave the man who had rented the land during his minority notice to quit, let his corn-mill to a Scotch Irishman, whose soul was not above grinding and meal, as was the soul of the heir, and began to lead that life for which he had long panted—a life of cheap debauchery, of economical villany, of consistent money-making.

Looking at the moss-covered drive, at the rusty gates, at the desolate park, at the weed-covered gardens, a stranger might have said, rashly, "The owner of this place must be a beggar."

But Mr. Brady knew what he was about. A well-kept avenue, gates that opened noiselessly, grass closely mown, gardens filled with fruit and flowers, all these things would have cost much whilst they returned nothing. They could return nothing to a man who wanted no help such as the appearance of wealth occasionally enables people to obtain. What he seemed would not, he was shrewd enough to understand, have the smallest weight with a community who mentally counted every sixpence of his inheritance the moment he laid claim to it. What he had would, he knew, be regarded ultimately with respect. Perhaps the Irish may not like moneyed men, but certainly they reverence them.

The almighty dollar will exercise its influence as well

amongst persons who swear against it as amongst those who swear by it. Mr. Daniel Brady was no fool in worldly matters, and he had early recognized the truth of that maxim which states, "Money is power."

What would the end find him? A pretentious snob, or a grubbing miser? The soil on which both grow is the same. The earth of which he was made could be moulded as readily into one as the other. He had youth in his favour, and youth is pliable. If a selfish, self-indulgent, insolent, meanly extravagant braggart be preferable in the reader's opinion to a wretched old miser, there is a chance for Mr. Daniel Brady exhibiting himself in the former character. At the time this story opens, however, he was in training for a miser. He was that most wonderful thing in creation, a young man niggardly even over his pleasures, calculating even concerning the things his soul most longed for, who was never led away by the voice of praise, or turned by that of censure, who had no impulses of generosity, kindliness, remorse; a wonderful thing, but not an uncommon. The world has a great many Daniel Bradys travelling through it, though we may reck not of their existence.

If the characters of men could be revealed when they give up their railway-tickets at the end of their morning journeys, it might surprise a good many unsuspecting people to discover the number of unmitigated scoundrels who have lent them the *Times*, or discoursed to them about the state of the weather and the funds.

Mr. Brady was an unmitigated scoundrel. The higher orders tabooed his existence; the middle regretted he had come to Maryville; the lower hated him.

Now the love of the lower orders is often open to be viewed with suspicion. Meretricious qualities may win it, adventitious circumstances secure it. About their hate there is no such mistake. They hate a man because of such and such qualities, which he possesses or does not possess, and there is an end of the matter. Had Mr. Brady announced to the beggars of Kingslough and its neighbourhood that on a given day he would distribute fifty pounds in charity, they would have known he had an ulterior object in view.

As it was, he never gave them a halfpenny, and that seemed a vice to the majority in those remote days, ere the Marquis of Townshend had begun his crusade against mendicants.

Then most people gave according as he or she could, gave

to the beggars who asked, and gave to the decent and reticent poor who would not ask, but whom they sought out and assisted.

Not a practicable thing to do, perhaps, at this time of the world, when the workhouse doors stand hospitably open to receive those who like to enter in and relinquish hope. Certainly not a practicable thing to do now, when the labouring classes say they are the dictators ; that they will have pence, and sixpences, and sovereigns out of the pockets of capitalists, whether capitalists lose or gain ; but then—then—ah ! heaven,—what was not a gift thrown to a half-naked beggar ? It meant a day's food. What good did not the present stealthily bestowed on a family too proud to ask, too lonely to have friends, effect ? It enabled struggling people to turn many an ugly corner, to keep a home, poor though it was, together, and avoid that last vague necessity of "going out on the world," a phrase which expresses in such few words a fearful calamity.

But neither openly nor by stealth did Mr. Brady perform any of those small acts of charity so universal and so needful at that time in his country, and his sins of omission were as duly set down to the debit of his account by an observant and exacting population as those of commission.

The very beggars hated him. The idiots, who then wandered loose about every town and village in Ireland, never with grotesque gesture and jabbering tone entreated a halfpenny of him. Instinctively the blind, knowing the sound of his horse's hoofs slunk on to the side path, or close up beside a wall or a hedge, on his approach ; the ragged, shoeless, homeless children never ran after that rider, praying him to throw them a "farden ;" the deaf and dumb, who, according to popular belief, had "knowledge," and whom it was not well to anger, looked at him menacingly and raised clenched fists when he had passed ; whilst "Trust in the Lord," so named because he was the religious begging impostor of Kingslough, maddened the young man by piously folding his hands when Mr. Brady crossed his path, and uttering ejaculatory and audible prayers for all sinners, more especially "for this sinner, who may be called the chief of them all."

As for Katty Clancy, who had begged her bread, and worn the same scanty petticoat, and covered her shoulders with the same washed out, ragged, picturesque, patchwork counter-

pane for forty long years, "a dissolute orphan," as she styled herself, till the absurdity of the lament was pointed out by Mrs. Hartley; as for Katty, Mr. Daniel Brady hated that woman with a completeness of detestation to which no words could do justice.

Others of her profession refrained from asking him for alms, but she took a delight in doing so, and in flinging some bitter taunt or gibe back in his face when he refused, generally with an oath, to give her one copper.

Their conversations were usually carried on somewhat as follows:—

"Good mornin,' Mr. Brady, isn't that the beautiful day, God bless it? Yer astir airly. An' where is it yer honour's goin' to in sich a hurry?"

"To ——," Mr. Brady replied, mentioning what Lord Stowell, in one of his judgments, styled a "favourite place of consignment."

"Ach, well yer honour, it's a long journey, and I wish ye safe there," said Katty, with persistent courtesy, and then Mr. Brady, muttering an oath, walked off, while Katty solemnly shook her head, and said *sotto voce*, "There's many a true word spoken in jest, and it's my belief, Dan Brady, ye are thravellin' that road as fast as time will let ye."

Before Nettie O'Hara, however, Mr. Brady had contrived to appear the incarnation of every manly virtue. He told the girl how much he loved her, spoke of his own lonely life at Maryville, of his solitary home, of the unjust stories his enemies had circulated to his prejudice, of the manner in which he was excluded from society for no reason in the world except that some of his family had made mésalliances, and that he himself was poor.

"But I mean to be rich one of these days, Nettie," he finished, "If you will only help me—if you will only try to grow fond of me."

Nettie, unhappily, had no occasion to try to grow fond of him. She loved his handsome face, and the notion of sharing his lonely home had no terrors for her.

She knew and he knew, it would be idle to ask her friends' consent. Indeed, he did not want it. He wanted her and he had got her. Flight was sudden at the last, but Nettie had long understood she meant to go off with him some day.

And that day, and many, many other days had come and gone, and Nettie was home at Maryville, walking about the

weed-covered garden, when her relatives the Rileys, father and son, paid their first visit to the house.

Amongst the other rarities and attractions Maryville had once boasted were a fish-pond and a sundial. The first was green with slime and choked with the leaves of water-plants, whilst round the rotting pillar of the dial climbed briony and convolvulus.

Besides the pond, with one hand resting on the slate time-teller, Nettie stood motionless. She did not hear the footsteps of her relatives as they fell silently on moss-covered walks and grass-grown paths. She was dressed in white, she had a blue ribbon round her waist, and another of the same colour kept back her hair—her long, bright, beautiful hair. Never afterwards did General Riley forget that picture, never could he quite efface from his memory the sight of that girl, almost a child, standing amongst that wilderness of rank vegetation, looking across the pond at a belt of dark firs which separated this portion of the gardens from the open park beyond.

"Nettie," John said softly; then with a start she turned and saw them, a colour rising in her face, and smiles dimpling her cheeks the while.

"Oh, General! Oh, John! this is kind of you," she said eagerly; "I did not think—that is, I did not hope——" and than she stopped and looked at them both, and General Riley looked at his son, and John at his father, perplexed as to what they were to do next.

"Are you quite well, Nettie?" asked the young man, after a moment's pause, looking a little doubtfully in her face, which, now the flush caused by their sudden appearance had died away, looked paler and thinner than ever he remembered to have seen it.

"Yes, very well, thank you," with an unnecessary emphasis on the very. "I am a little tired; we only came home the evening before last, and you know I am not much accustomed to travelling."

"Did you like Scotland?"

"Greatly, but I think I like Ireland best." There was a wistful anxious look in the blue eyes that neither man could help noticing, and Nettie perceiving that they did so, went on to ask, quickly, "How is Grace?"

"Well, I believe," John answered.

"You believe?" she repeated.

"Yes," he said quietly. "I have not seen Grace for some weeks. The fact is, she has refused me, and I am going away. You have not been in the neighbourhood, or you would have heard all about that long ago."

Nettie did not reply, she stood looking at the fir-trees with great serious eyes. She seemed prettier then than John had ever before thought her—poor little girl.

"We were told we should find Mr. Brady here," broke in General Riley at this juncture. "I suppose the servant made some mistake."

"*Then you did not come to see me!*" she exclaimed, taking her eyes from the firs and fastening them on their faces.

"Of course we came to see you," said John falsely, but kindly. He could not endure the dumb anguish of her expression.

"You did not," she said vehemently. "Don't tell untruths to me, John Riley; you have come to talk to my husband about me, and to meddle in my concerns, but you did not come to see me as relations should come to see one another. You think I have disgraced myself by marrying out of your rank—yours, what is it?—and you do not want to visit me yourselves or to let your sisters do so. When my husband has a large property like yours, and money to keep it up, which he will have, and you never will, then I shall be able to pick and choose my friends, but till then I must be content to live without any."

Then, with a catching sob, she stopped, her eyes flashing, her cheeks aflame, while John Riley, preventing his father answering, and passing over the sting her words held, said,—

"No one will be better pleased than we to hear you and your husband are happy and prosperous, Nettie. It would be useless to deny that we did, and do, regret the step you have taken, but that step has been taken, and it behoves us, as your nearest male friends, to see that its consequences prove as little disastrous to you as may be."

"You are very kind," said Nettie sarcastically.

"Our intentions are so, at all events," answered John, with a temper and a humility which touched even Nettie.

"I believe," she said, "you are the best person in the world, and I am sure your intentions are always good and kind, but you have made a mistake this time. It is not well to meddle between man and wife."

"When were you made man and wife?" asked the General,

charging like an old soldier direct to the point he wanted to reach.

"What business is that of yours, General Riley?" she retorted. "It was not you Mr. Brady married."

"Be reasonable, Nettie," interposed John. "On my word we do not want to make or to meddle; we only desire to protect. If we fail in our duty now, the day may come when you will say to us, 'I was but a girl, ignorant of the world, and you left me to bear the consequences of my rashness; you never advised, you never helped me.' All we want to know is that you have been so securely married no doubt can be thrown upon the matter, and afterwards——" he stopped.

"What about afterwards?"

"We must leave afterwards to take care of itself, having done all it seemed possible in the present."

"Do you think I am not married then?" she asked; "that I would come back to Kingslough if—if——"

"There is no necessity for you to get into a passion with us, Nettie," interrupted her cousin. "We think no evil of you, but you are only a young and inexperienced girl, and to put the argument in a nutshell, we have taken this matter up, and mean to have it put in proper form."

"You had better see my husband, then," she exclaimed. "I do not suppose he will give you much of a welcome, but if you choose to insult a man in his own house, you have only yourselves to thank if you meet with scant courtesy," and with her head up in the air, and her blue ribbons floating, and her golden curls glinting in the sunlight, Nettie led them out of the garden, and by a side door, into a small sitting-apartment, which had, in the days when Maryville was in its glory, been an inner drawing-room or boudoir—my lady's closet, perhaps, where she conducted her correspondence, or worked at her embroidery.

A second door led to the drawing-room, which was bare of all furniture, unless a huge chandelier, a cracked girandole, and a rickety sofa could be so considered; but the door was closed, and the Rileys could not see the nakedness of the land.

Instead, they beheld an apartment furnished with a few chairs and a couple of tables, the floor covered with a somewhat faded Kidderminster carpet; but, taking one thing with another, the place did not look poverty stricken or uncomfortable.

"It is not much of a home I am able to welcome you to,"

said Nettie, turning defiantly upon her relations, "but at least it is clear of debt."

"Nettie," replied John Riley, "you cannot hurt us, so say what you please; at the same time I would ask if you think it worth while to try and insult those who have no object in being here beyond that I have stated."

"Some day, child," added the General, "you may understand it is better to be honestly indebted than dishonestly clear of debt."

"I never could understand paradoxes," said Nettie, and she sat down beside the window, her white hands linked together in her lap, and her pretty head averted from her visitors till Mr. Brady, for whom she had sent, entered.

Erelong Mr. Brady appeared. He came in with a slight swagger, looking a little nervous, but handsome and defiant as ever.

"This is a pleasure I did not hope for so soon," he began. "Glad to see you, General. How do you do, Squire?" and he extended his hand to the visitors, but General Riley crossed his behind his back, and John thrust his in his pockets.

It was not a pleasant position for any one of the four, most unpleasant of all, perhaps, for Nettie, and yet she alone was equal to the occasion.

"Do you mean, John Riley," she said, turning upon him like a fury, "that you refuse, having voluntarily come into this house, to shake hands with its master, my husband?"

"No man will be more ready than I, Nettie, to give my hand to Mr. Brady when he has proved himself worthy to take it," John answered steadily.

"I understand you," answered Mr. Brady, "this is a business visit?"

"Strictly so," was the reply.

"You had better leave us to discuss business, Annette," said Mr. Brady. "Pray be seated, gentlemen;" then after the sound of Nettie's footsteps had died away he went on, "Now what do you want? what is it?"

"We want to know if you are married to my cousin?" said John.

"You had better have put that question to her."

"We have."

"And what answer did she give you?"

"She evidently considers she is legally your wife."

"Then, what more do you want?"

"Proof that her idea is correct."

"Supposing I refuse to give it?"

"We will make you give it, sir," interposed the General.

"Two to one is scarcely fair," remarked Mr. Brady, "still curiosity makes me inquire how you propose to make me open my mouth if I choose to keep it shut?"

"I do not know——" the General was beginning, when his son interrupted him with—

"One moment, father. I hope you misunderstood Mr. Brady's reply. This is not a matter, I should think, about which he would wish to keep us in the dark. It is absolutely essential," he went on, speaking to Mr. Brady, "that we should understand my cousin's position."

"Why?"

"Because if she be not your wife already, you must immediately make her so."

"Again I ask, why?"

"Do you suppose we should allow her to remain with you an hour longer excepting as your wife?"

"I really do not see how you are to help yourselves."

"Mr. Brady," began John, "I cannot believe you are speaking seriously. I think you must be trying to annoy us by persisting in what is at best but a very sorry sort of jest. We have not come here to reproach you for the scandal you have caused a respectable family, for the advantage you have taken of an ignorant and unprotected girl. We merely desire to know if you have made her the only reparation in your power. Is she legally your wife?"

"That is a question I decline to answer."

"Is she not your wife?"

"That likewise is a question I decline to answer."

"You villain!" exclaimed the General, "we will find means to make you answer," and he was advancing with raised hand and threatening gesture towards Mr. Brady, when his son stepped between them.

"We shall not do any good by using violence, father," he said, putting a curb on his own temper, and clenching his fingers, which were itching to grasp his riding-whip, and lay it about the shoulders of the self-possessed scoundrel who stood before him, smiling contemptuously.

"There is only one course left open for us to pursue now; we must take Nettie away, and get legal advice as to what we ought to do next,"

"I apprehend your legal adviser will say that even loving relatives like you cannot separate husband and wife," replied Mr. Brady.

"It will be for you then to prove that you are her husband."

"And what if Annette refuses to go?"

"She will not remain here when I tell her how she has been deceived," was the answer, and John Riley took up his hat and whip, and was following his father to the door, when Mr. Brady stopped them.

"A moment," he said; "do not be in such a hurry, gentlemen. If you, General, will kindly restrain your temper, and you, Mr. Riley, will kindly hold your tongue, perhaps some arrangements may be come to. I have declined," he went on, after a pause, "to tell you whether the young lady in whose affairs you have interfered so officiously is my wife or not, for the extremely simple reason that I am not at all clear on the point myself. I think she is my wife if I like to claim her: I think she is not my wife if I choose to repudiate her. It is an awkward position for her, certainly, and I do not imagine it can be a pleasant one for her relatives."

"Well, sir?" said General Riley, to whom this speech was specially addressed.

"To make the thing secure for her we certainly ought to go though some sort of ceremony, otherwise I do not see how she is either to prove that she is married or unmarried. It is an awkward affair for me, too. I am a poor man. I had enough burdens before, without hampering myself with a wife. I cannot say I have much taste for domestic felicity; and after the specimen of good breeding you have given me to-day, I can imagine many things more desirable than a connexion with the Riley family."

"In heaven's name what are you driving at?" asked the General. "We do not want a dissertation on your tastes and prejudices, we want to know, in a word, whether you will marry Nettie, or whether you will leave us to seek our remedy elsewhere."

"Meaning at law?"

"Meaning at law, and also that I will give you a thrashing you shall remember to your dying day," said John Riley.

"I requested you to hold your tongue, did I not?" retorted Mr. Brady coolly. "As I was saying," he continued, addressing the General, "the holy state of matrimony is not

one into which I have the least desire to enter, more especially with such a useless young lady as your relative; still I am willing to meet your views. I am not desirous of raising any scandal, and if you like to make it worth my while I will take her for better for worse."

"Make it worth your while?" repeated the General.

"Yes, you do not expect me to do something for nothing, do you? I shall have to board and clothe a young woman for the remainder of her days, and resign my liberty in addition. I do not want, however, to drive a hard bargain, or take advantage of your difficulty. The girl has, I believe, a hundred pounds or so of her own. Make it up five hundred, and I will send for the minister here, or marry her in church, whichever you like."

"I'll see you——"

To what lot or in what place General Riley intended to say he would see the speaker may be imagined, but can never now be exactly known, for while he was uttering these words the door between the outer and the inner drawing-room opened, and Nettie herself appeared.

"Take me away, John," she said, "take me anywhere out of this house, away from him."

"You have been listening," observed Mr. Brady, disconcerted for the first time.

"Yes, it was my affair and I had a right to hear. Take me away, John, from that bad, false man. Do you understand what I say? Oh! and I was so fond of him, and I believed him. I did," and she burst into a fit of hysterical weeping, and her face, her shamed, grief-stained face, covered with her hands, hurried from the room.

"Go after her, John," said the General, "and keep her in the garden till I have settled this matter one way or other."

"And hark ye, mister," called out Mr. Brady, "she does not leave this place without my consent: ay, and, for all her crying, she does not want to leave it."

Which last clause was hard to believe in the face of Nettie's passionate entreaties for John to take her away, away at once.

"And to think of how I trusted him," she moaned. "If the whole world had spoken ill of him it could not have changed me. I thought I knew him better than anybody, and this is the end of it all, this is the end."

And so she moaned on for some fifteen minutes, whilst John stood leaning against a tree.

In truth he did not know what to say. His heart was full of compassion for her, but he could not think of a word of comfort good to speak. She had done so evil a thing for herself that he did not see how any one could make a better of it, and so, whilst she, seated amongst the long rank grass, made her bitter lamentations, sobbed her tears, and bewailed her lot, John Riley did, perhaps, the kindest and wisest thing possible under the circumstances, he held his peace, he let her alone.

CHAPTER XI.

NETTIE AT BAY.

At last General Riley appeared.

"It is all right, I am thankful to say," he announced to his son, in a low tone. "He will marry her."

"But I will not marry him!" exclaimed the person most interested in the matter. "I would rather work, beg, starve, die, than be thrust in this way on any man."

"You ought to have thought of all this before you went away with him," said the General bluntly. "We have made the best of a very bad business for you, and I must beg of you not to undo our work by any temper, or airs, or romantic nonsense. There is nothing left for you but to marry him, and a good thing it is that he is willing to take you for his wife."

Swiftly Nettie rose from the ground and stood slight and erect and before him. With one hand she swept back her hair, with the other she wiped the tears from her cheeks. Pretty she did not look, with her swollen eyelids and her face disfigured by grief and weeping; but there was something in the helplessness of her defiance, in the hoplessness of her struggle, in the prospective misery of her fate, in the utter ruin she had wrought for herself, so young, that made both men feel heart-sick at thought of their own inability to put this terrible wrong right.

"Are you going to turn against me?" she said, speaking to John. "Are you going to say there is nothing left for me to do but marry a man who does not want me, whose wife I thought I was, or you would never have seen me back here? Will you not help me, John? will you not take me away?"

"God knows, Nettie, I would help you if I only knew how. I would take you away if I knew where to take you, if I thought it would not make a worse scandal than there has been, and put everything more wrong than it is already."

"I would go anywhere you told me," she went on pitifully. "I would go where nobody knew me, and I would be a good girl and work hard."

"You could not go anywhere that people would not know all about it after a little time," answered her cousin. "There is only one thing for a girl who has made a mistake like yours, dear, to do, and that is, marry. What my father says is very true, you may be glad enough that Mr. Brady is willing to marry you."

"Willing to marry me?" Nettie repeated drearily. '*Willing* to marry *me?*' There go, both of you," she added, turning upon them in a very access of passion. "I never want to see you again. I never wish to hear the voice of one belonging to me. If you had been in trouble, such trouble, I would have helped you; but there is nobody who cares for my trouble, nobody, no, not one."

"Crying again, Annette," exclaimed Mr. Brady, who, having only waited behind General Riley in order to refresh himself with a glass of whisky after their stormy interview, at this point joined the trio. "What is the matter now?" and he put his hand on her shoulder and would have drawn her towards him, but she shrank away, and looking at him through her tears, with hot angry eyes, began,—

"They say *you* are willing to marry *me*, and expect me to be thankful. They never asked me if *I* was willing to marry *you*."

"There is no compulsion," said Mr. Brady coolly; "you need not if you do not like."

"Like? and you say that to me who have given up everything for you?"

"I am ready to marry you within the hour," said Mr. Brady, with a shrug. "Can I say fairer than that, gentlemen? If Miss Annette like teaching better than marrying, far be it from me to balk her taste; if she like me better than teaching, I am ready to stand to what I have said, and make her Mrs. Brady."

"And you do not care," said Nettie, speaking with dry, parched lips and cheeks fever-flushed, "you do not care, and you call yourselves men?"

"We do care, Nettie," answered John Riley, "and it is because we are men that we have tried to do all that lay in our power for you. It seems hard to you, and it is hard. You are angry with Mr. Brady and with us, but by-and-by you will thank us for advising you to marry him."

"I never was an advocate for coaxing dogs to eat mutton," remarked Mr. Brady, with a sneer. "I have offered to marry this independent young lady, and as she does not like to have me, why she had better leave me, that is if she has a clear idea as to where she means to go afterwards."

"I will go to Bayview, to Grace Moffat."

"I would, and let us know how Mr. Moffat receives you," he laughed.

"My aunt, my poor old aunt that I deceived, she would not turn me from her door," sobbed Nettie.

"Perhaps not, you might see."

"Then, if all else fail," she flashed out, "I will trust to Mrs. Hartley's charity. I will ask her to take me in and find me work. I am neither kith nor kin to her, and she would think it no disgrace to shelter a girl who had been deceived like me. She would get me a situation in some place, and I will put the sea between myself and all of you, and none of you will ever hear of me again."

Mr. Brady looked at the General and his son. He beheld consternation written on their faces.

At last Nettie was mistress of the position. She had mentioned the name of the only friend she knew who would be willing and able to save her, and the idea of the scandal which might ensue if she carried out her threat of appealing to Mrs. Hartley was as little agreeable to her relations as to the man who had flung a shadow over her life.

The girl was desperate, her pride had been humbled, her vanity hurt, her temper aroused, her love wounded, slighted. She meant to leave him, she did *not* want to be forced on any man. Mr. Brady suddenly awoke to a consciousness of both facts, and to a knowledge, also, that it would not suit him to lose her.

Never again would he, could he, hold such another card in his hands as Nettie O'Hara. If he played so as to let her and her wrongs slip away from his control, if once he permitted her to make a party against him, and backed by Mrs. Hartley he knew she could, he vaguely comprehended he would have raised a devil whom he might find it difficult to lay.

Besides, he was not yet tired of Nettie; her thoughts had not been his thoughts, her sole companionship had proved slightly monotonous; she had put, unwittingly, a sort of restraint upon him; but still, if Daniel Brady had ever an affection for a woman into which a higher kind of love entered, he felt it for Nettie O'Hara.

Had Nettie only been possessed of the world's wisdom in those days when surreptitiously she met him on the sea-shore, amongst the ruins of Ballyknock Abbey, and in the glens where, in her lonely childhood, she gathered wild strawberries, and made for herself swords and parasols and butterfly cages of rushes; had she, I say, then understood the ways of the world and the minds of men, she would never have gone off with Daniel Brady, trusting to his love to keep her safe, trusting to his gratitude to repay her for her faith.

After all, affairs of the heart are best to be put on a "commercial basis."

When one man is, to use a vulgar expression, "chiselled" by another, the first dose of comfort administered by his friends is, "But why had you no agreement?"

If the unhappy wretch suggests that he thought he had to do with a man of honour, or an honest man, or a sincere Christian, he is at once informed, "It is well in money-matters to treat every man as if he were a rogue."

And in love? you ask. Well, in love it may be as well to advise young persons about to form engagements for life to look upon all charming suitors as possible villains. It is not an amiable trait in the character of man or woman that which leads him (or her) to make himself (or herself) beyond all things safe, but it is necessary, nevertheless.

Suppose a man loses his money, or a woman her character, who shall recoup him, or her?

The colonies or the workhouse for the one; the streets or that exhilarating place of abode, a Refuge, for the other.

And yet, perhaps, neither might be a greater fool nor a greater sinner than Amos Scott on the one hand, or Annette, commonly called Nettie O'Hara, on the other.

Each had trusted to a promise. It is a foolish way some people have, as though there were something in the nature of a promise that made it as secure as a deed. Each found reason to repent that trust. Nettie's repentance had begun already. Dimly she understood there had been a time when her terms would have ruled the day, when her beauty and her

birth might have asked what they liked from this far-seeing lover, and received a charming yea for answer.

But that time was gone and past. She never could dictate (legitimately) terms to any man again. She had lost caste, friends, and what was, perhaps, worse than either, her "future." For even if she appealed to Mrs. Hartley and tried by that lady's help to begin her life over again, she never could wipe out the blot on her former life ; not all the waters of Lethe could wash out from her past that morning's work, when, trusting to one untrustworthy, she went off to seek her ruin.

All this the girl dimly comprehended, grasped in a feeble passionate despair. No longer meek and demure, no longer smiling and self-contained, she stood there at bay, and for the moment, as has been said, she was mistress of the position.

True she could help herself little, but she could injure Mr. Brady much, and inflict, besides, considerable annoyance on her relatives. The bright hair might remain bright as ever, the blue eyes might look soft and sweet as before, but something had been aroused in Nettie O'Hara that might never slumber again.

"I want to leave Kingslough," she went on, pursuing her advantage, "and I will leave it. I never wish to see one of you more, and I never will if I can help it."

"But, Nettie, dear, only consider," began her cousin, while the General muttered, "Never heard such nonsense in all my life," but Mr. Brady, cutting across both their sentences, said,——

"Will you kindly walk to the other end of the garden ? I should like to say a word or two to Mrs. Brady alone."

She looked up at him quickly, and answered, as they complied, "I am not Mrs. Brady, and never will be."

"You are," he persisted, "and you can't help yourself. You are my wife if I choose to claim you, and I do. You are mine, and I mean to keep you. Little as you may think it, I am too fond of you to let you go."

"Fond !" she repeated contemptuously.

"Yes," he said, "fond. If I hadn't been, do you think I would have made the fool of myself I have ? What did I want with a wife ? Why should I have burdened myself with you if it was not for fondness' sake ? If you had not listened, you would have known nothing of this. Listeners, you know,

never hear any good of themselves. You are married to me safe enough, but I wanted to bring down the confounded pride of your people a peg or two, and I wanted, also, to get some money out of them for you and myself if I could manage it. That is the whole truth of the business, so you need not fret any more."

"I do not believe a word of it," was Nettie's candid reply, "but I do not intend to fret, and I will go to Mrs. Hartley, and neither you nor all the Rileys in creation shall hinder me."

"I thought you loved me," he said, with an impatience he tried to control, but could not.

"Thought I loved you?" she echoed, "thought! I never loved anything before except a kitten, and I never mean to love anything again."

"And yet you want to go and make a talk and a scandal over the place, and curse my life and your own."

"Make a talk and a scandal! No. I only want to leave a man who could treat a girl as you have treated me. Did not I ask you if we were safely and truly married? and did you not swear to me on the Bible that not all the bishops in England could make us more man and wife than we were?"

"Nor could they," commented Mr. Brady.

"And," went on Nettie, "when I asked you to give me some writing that I could show to Grace and my aunt, and John, if he wanted to see it, you told me you would satisfy them all; that no writing would be of so much use as your simple acknowledgment that I was your wife; and this is how you acknowledge me. Well, I deserved it, I suppose, but I did not deserve it from you."

She ought not to have "stood upon the order of going," but have gone, if she meant to leave him. Her words were bitter, and her anger keen, but neither was bitter nor keen enough to win the day when once she began to argue with a man to whom her heart still clung, whom she loved as she had "never loved anything before."

"You did not deserve it," he answered, more quietly, for he saw she was wavering in her determination, and knew that now compliance was a mere question of time, "and I am sorry that for the sake of gratifying myself and annoying your upstart relations I placed you even for a moment in a false position. A man cannot say more than that he is sorry, can he? Give me your hand, and say you forgive and forget."

But she twitched her fingers out of his, and sobbed, "It was cruel, it was cruel."

"It was," he agreed, "but remember, I never intended you to know anything about the matter. You would not have heard had you not listened. Put yourself in my place. Had a couple of women treated you as those two men treated me, should you not have tried to serve them out if you could?"

"And did not I stand up for you?" she exclaimed. "Oh! I would have been faithful to you till death, but you——"

"Annette, as true as death you are my wife. You are so much my wife, that if you went away from me now you could not marry any one else, and neither could I."

"It does not matter," she said. "I do not want to marry any one else, I only want to go away."

"Well, then, go," he exclaimed. "I will never beg and pray a woman to stay with me against her will. You are married to me safe enough, but I am ready, for all that, to satisfy you and your people by going through the ceremony again if you like. If you do not like, go to your friend Mrs. Hartley, and see what she will do for you. Only remember one thing, if you elect to leave me now, never ask me to take you back again. I would not do it if you came covered with diamonds."

She was but a young thing, for all her defiance; for all her anger she was but as a reed in his hands, and so, when he gave her free leave to go, bade her spread her wings and return to that waste of waters from which she had flown to him, as to an ark of refuge, Nettie covered her face and wept aloud.

"There is nothing to cry about," he remarked. "It is a matter for your own choice. Come now, be reasonable. What more could I do than I have done? What more could I offer than I have offered?"

Still no answer.

"Annette, do not keep on fretting," he entreated; "try to put out of your mind every thing you heard me say to-day. I did not mean a word of it; I did not, upon my honour. I was angry and offended, and spoke without thought, but you should not bear malice. You will forgive and forget, won't you?"

"I will for—give," she said, after a pause, with a sob between each word.

"And forget," he added, but Nettie shook her head doubtfully.

"I am not good at forgetting," she answered. Poor Mrs. Hartley, could she only have heard that reply, it would have made her hair stand on end!

"I'll chance that," said Mr. Brady generously, and he walked off to the spot where the General and his son stood, surveying a wilderness wilder than any their own neglected estate could show.

"We have made up that little difference," he said, with a smile and an easy familiarity which caused John Riley to wince, "and now I am ready to go through the rest of the business when and where you please. It is quite unnecessary, I may remark. At any rate we had better agree that it is, but that to satisfy your scruples I have agreed to ceremony number two. We may as well be married by the minister here, or at Woodbrook, which you please. It will make less talk than going to church, and you can have as many witnesses as you like. In for a penny in for a pound. Of course Mrs. Brady remains here. If she is to remain in my house I do not intend her to leave it except in my company. Scandal about your relation could not hurt me, but scandal about my wife I won't have; besides, you have no place to take her to;" and Mr. Daniel Brady laughed triumphantly.

"Come, gentlemen," he went on, "it is no use making the worst of a bad business. You have checkmated me, I confess; and yet, still I bear no malice. Bad blood is an evil thing, especially amongst relations. Can I offer you any refreshment—no? Then, Mr. Riley, I depend on your seeing the minister and arranging everything to your own satisfaction. You will shake hands with me now, I suppose," and he stretched out his hand; but neither the General nor his son availed himself of the opportunity afforded.

A dark look crossed Mr. Brady's face, as he said, in a tone of defiant mockery,—

"At least, you can never say it was not offered to you twice in one day."

"I believe you to be a consummate blackguard," remarked John Riley bluntly; "but still, for Nettie's sake, I am willing to shake hands and let bygones be bygones."

"And you, General?" asked Mr. Brady. Without a word

the General stretched out his hand. "You won't repent it," remarked Mr. Brady consolingly.

"I shall be back as soon as I can bring a minister," said John. Those were the days when marriage in Ireland was almost as easy as in Scotland.

"The sooner the better," observed Mr. Brady; and he stood watching the pair as they trotted slowly down the moss-covered avenue, muttering to himself, "Now they are reckoning me up;" but he was mistaken, for the iron had entered too deeply into their souls to be lightly spoken of.

One thing, however, was significant. A mile from Maryville a stream, bright and sparkling, crossed the road.

"Hold my horse for a minute, John," said the General; and dismounting, he put the hand Daniel Brady had grasped into the rivulet, and let the water flow over it.

"That is a good example, father," he remarked laughing; "and I think I will follow it;" then, as he remounted, he said, in a changed tone, "God help Nettie," to which the General responded, "Amen."

Next day, one of the Woodbrook servants having driven into town to execute various commissions, called on his way back at "The Library," for a book to Miss Lucy, who was the only reading sister of the Riley family.

After replying to such anxious inquiries concerning the health of Mrs. Riley and the General, and the young ladies, and Mr. John, and an antiquated gardener, and still more antiquated nurse, who had lived with the family for a few generations, nominally as servants, but in reality as masters, Patrick, who all the time had been panting to open his budget, began,—

"Ye'll likely have heard the news, ladies?"

"That Miss Nettie, I mean Mrs. Brady, has come home, Patrick. Oh, yes! we knew that long ago," said Miss Healey, with dignity.

"It was not that same I meant, Miss; they have been married again."

"Married again!" exclaimed the two sisters who could hear, in chorus; "bless us, wasn't one marriage enough?"

"The Gineral would have it, miss—ma'am: says he to Brady, says he, 'I don't like hole-and-corner weddings,' says he, 'and as you are an Irishman and have chosen an Irish wife, why, to make all sure, you had better marry her again, fair and above board;' and so he did."

"When were they married? who married them? who was present?" the sisters were literally breathless with excitement, and shrieked out their questions, unheeding Miss Kate, whose inquiries of "What is he saying?" "What is the matter?" "Who is dead?" "Is it the General?" Dear, what can have happened?" formed a running accompaniment to the trio which was being performed by Mrs. Larkins, Miss Healey, and Patrick.

"'Deed an' they were just married at Maryville, and Mr. McKenna married them; and Mr. John, and me, and Mr. McKenna's clerk, were the witnesses."

"And were none of your ladies there?" inquired Mrs. Larkins.

"I do not think—asking your pardon, ma'am, for being so free—that it would be a very seemly thing for any of our ladies to be seen going to Maryville."

From which remark it will be understood that Nettie's relations did not intend to visit her, and that popular opinion already applauded their resolution.

And so Nettie's return and marriage made a nine days' talk, and caused a nine days' wonder, at the expiration of which time another event occurred, which made a greater talk still.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. BRADY UNDERSTANDS HER POSITION.

Tacitly Kingslough had decided that Mrs. Brady was not to be visited. Just as by one consent the public sometimes agrees to condemn an untried man, so gentle and simple made up their minds not to enter the gates of Maryville.

Those of Nettie's own class, having regard to that which they considered a *mésalliance*, quietly tabooed the fact of her marriage and her existence; those of a lower grade, remembering what Miss O'Hara's father had been, and what the Rileys were, feeling if they called upon the young wife she might not feel grateful for their attentions, agreed it might be prudent for them to abstain from showing any.

Wherein they were wise. Scant civility would any one have met from Nettie, who, presuming upon an altered position, had tried to force unwelcome acquaintanceship on

her. Mrs. Brady was not one to be satisfied with dry bread, when she had expected to feast on cake.

She could do without either. That was what the uplifting of her little head and the defiant flash of her blue eyes silently informed society.

"She could live alone, she would live alone," this the burden of her talk to Mrs. Hartley, who, being above or below the considerations that usually influenced the going and coming of Kingslough's upper ten, could afford to set precedence and public opinion at defiance, hired the best covered car Kingslough boasted, and drove solemnly out to Maryville to see the bride, and give her some old-fashioned advice as to the way in which she was to order her future conduct, and make a good thing of the years that had still to come, still to be lived somehow, happily or miserably, creditably or the reverse.

"One day," Mrs. Brady proceeded, "perhaps they" (they stood for the retired officers of the army and navy, the clergy, the attorneys and agents, the widows, old maids, poodles, and others who constituted the aristocracy of Kingslough) "may wish to know me again, and then I will have nothing to do with them."

"When that day comes," said Mrs. Hartley, with the coolness which exasperated many of her acquaintances, "you will of course have as perfect a right to select the houses at which you chose to visit as the Kingslough people have now."

"Or as I have now," amended Nettie.

"Pardon me, I think your selection is at present confined to those at which you will not visit," answered Mrs. Hartley. "It is of no use, Nettie," she went on, stroking the bright, fair hair kindly and sorrowfully, "it is of no use trying to fight the world single-handed. You are very young and you are very pretty, and you have a will of your own and a temper of your own that few gave you credit for possessing; but neither youth nor beauty, nor obstinacy, nor being at bottom a little atom of a vixen, will win this battle for you. If you take an old woman's advice, you will lay down your arms, and let people imagine you are still the gentle, quiet Nettie they used to see going to school. You cannot eat your cake and have it. You knew perfectly what Kingslough thought, whether rightly or wrongly, of Mr. Brady, and still you chose to marry Mr. Brady. Now you want Mr. Brady

and Kingslough as well; at least, you are bitter because Kingslough has not welcomed your return with open arms. What you ought to say to yourself now is, 'Never mind, I have got my husband to care for and to love me, and so long as we are happy together, no slights the world chooses to put upon us can affect us much;'" and as Mrs. Hartley ended this very proper sentence she looked closely and curiously at Nettie, who, muttering something about the heat of the room, rose and opened one of the windows.

It proved rather a long operation, but when she returned to her seat the flush Mrs. Hartley had noticed rising even to her temples had not faded quite away.

"Next time you come to see me," Nettie began, ignoring the previous subject of conversation, "I hope you will find the house looking more comfortable. We have furniture coming from Kilcurragh, but it cannot be here for a few days."

"My dear," said Mrs. Hartley, "furniture does not necessarily mean happiness, any more than——"

"Oh, I know that, of course!" Nettie interrupted, a little peevishly; "still one would wish to have a few chairs, and perhaps a couple of tables in a sitting-room, for all that."

It was characteristic of Mrs. Brady that she elected to receive her visitor in the drawing-room, which looked like a barren wilderness, and contained very few more articles of furniture than when she first beheld its gaunt and pretentious nakedness, rather than in the smaller apartment where John Riley and his father had held their interview with her husband.

Mrs. Hartley sat on the dilapidated sofa while Nettie tried to look comfortable on a very hard and very high, straight-backed chair. Three windows, reaching from the floor almost to the ceiling, looked out on the weed-grown garden and the tangled wilderness beyond, so that the visitor had plenty of light to view the old-fashioned chimney-piece, on the white marble of which cupids disported themselves, holding wreaths that seemed almost black with dirt—black and grimy as the wings of the cupids.

Nevertheless a handsome chimney-piece—handsome and fantastic, like the great chandelier that hung in the centre of the room, and seemed to Mrs. Hartley's critical eye to stand in as much need of a scrubbing as the floor itself, from contact with which she had carefully preserved her own

dress, and would fain have advised Nettie to guard her muslin, had that young lady seemed more amenable to common sense, and less sensitive concerning the loss of social position induced by her marriage.

To Mrs. Hartley it did not signify in what rank Mrs. Brady was now supposed to be, and she felt sorry to notice how much it appeared to signify to Nettie. She had known girls make foolish matches before, and she had seen them put up with the consequences, but never before had she beheld a young wife battling like Nettie against the results entailed by her own act.

Dimly she began to fancy that the girl had married less for love of Mr. Brady than for weariness of her monotonous life, and that now, when the new life promised to be as monotonous as the old, and there was, besides no hope of escape from it, the hitherto unsuspected side of Nettie's character was beginning to crop up. But Mrs. Hartley, though partly right, was yet greatly wrong, both in her premises and the results she deduced from them.

Nettie had staked everything she owned—everything that seemed of value to her—in order to gain her husband, and now she knew he was not worth the price at which she purchased him. She had made a mistake which she would never be able to remedy. No; not if she lived for a hundred years, and it was not in her nature to forgive society for deserting and leaving her to bear the consequences of her error as best she might, all alone.

She had taken her own course, and that course had made her bankrupt. The world might have helped to render the lot she had chosen happier, but virtually the world had turned its back upon her and said, "You may carry your burden as best you can. You may bear your trouble as well as you are able."

That was the secret of Nettie's anger and Nettie's petulance. Her heart was bleeding, and not a hand was stretched forth to stanch it. Such fearful isolation, such utter desertion were almost maddening to Nettie, who had always thought a good deal of herself, and to whom it never occurred for one moment that when she went off with Mr. Brady, she took leave of her relatives and society at the same time.

She could have quarrelled with her own shadow. She would have liked to strike some one, to scold as a very virago, and so get rid of even a part of the anger and sorrow, and

disappointment and humiliation that were raging within her. She had gone as far as she dared with Mrs. Hartley, but to no purpose. She had tried to exhibit her grievances, and her sensible visitor plainly said she had none; implying rather, indeed, that society and her relatives were aggrieved instead. It was all very hard upon Nettie, and had Mrs. Hartley only suspected how thoroughly the girl already realized the completeness of her mistake, she might have dealt more gently with the blue-eyed beauty, whose pretty face had brought such ruin on her life.

As it was, Mrs. Hartley felt a little provoked with her former favourite.

Elderly people are apt to be a little severe upon young ones when the ways and thoughts of the latter are beyond their comprehension; and Mrs. Hartley was severe in her judgment of Nettie, more especially when their conversation turned, as it soon did, upon Miss Moffat.

"You have heard from Grace, I suppose?" said Mrs. Hartley.

"I have. She told you she had written to me, of course?"

Mrs. Hartley wondered at the "of course," but contented herself with answering "Yes."

"Did she tell you also what she had sent me?"

"No; I do not think, whatever her faults may be, Grace is a girl to talk to one friend about any gift she might intend to make to another."

"She sent me this!" Nettie exclaimed, pulling out of her belt an extremely beautiful and expensive watch, which Mrs. Hartley recognised as one formerly belonging to Miss Moffat. "She said in her letter she would have bought me a new one——" for a moment the speaker's voice trembled, and she hesitated before finishing her sentence, "but in that case she must wait until her father went to Dublin, and she did not want to wait, and, besides that, she had worn this so constantly, it was like sending me a piece of herself, as she could not come to see me. And there was something besides the watch and chain." Here Nettie, apparently on the brink of a confidence, broke off abruptly.

"*I* wanted to return her presents," she went on, after a pause, and Mrs. Hartley noticed how nervously and passionately the fingers of her clasped hands laced and twisted round and about, in and out of one another. "I would have sent them back, but Mr. Brady would not let me, I would

not have kept aeything in the house sent by a person who thought herself too good to come and see me; but I could not help myself. It is not with any goodwill I wear this thing. I would rather Gracie had come to see me than that anybody had given me ten thousand pounds; and if she did not like to do that, she ought not to have made me presents, and I told her so; Mr. Brady could not prevent my doing that, and I did it."

"Then you ought to be ashamed of your ungrateful childishness!" exclaimed Mrs. Hartley; "and I only wish Mr. Brady could have prevented such an exhibition of temper. It is nothing but temper which is the matter with you, Nettie; and if you do not take care, you will lose the few friends who have remained true to you, and who will remain true to you if you choose to let them, foolish and inconsiderate though your conduct may have been."

"Friends!" repeated Nellie scornfully, but tears filled her eyes as she spoke, and Mrs. Hartley, seeing them, relented.

"You have friends, dear," she said. "John Riley is your friend, so am I, so is Grace. I am an old woman, and free to go where and to whom I choose; but Grace is not free, she cannot come to see you, she cannot set up her own opinion against that of all her advisers. She has no mother; you know yourself how little of a protector Mr. Moffat is capable of being, and till she marries it behoves her to be careful and prudent. I think I may safely say, had Grace been Mrs. Riley, you would have seen her here the day she heard of your arrival: as it is——"

"She ought to have taken no notice of me, I should have felt it less," finished Nettie. "Tell her though, Mrs. Hartley," she went on, kneeling before that lady, and resting her arms across her lap, while she turned up her face, which looked at the moment pathetically beautiful, towards her mentor, "tell her I am sorry for writing that nasty letter; tell her I did not mean half nor a quarter what I said in it; but I was angry, I was hurt; she ought not to have sent me money, it was like buying me off. It was treating me like a beggar."

"It is difficult to please every one," remarked Mrs. Hartley; "I am treated frequently like a thief, because I do not send money to those who have no right to it. But proceed. How did Grace happen so far to forget what was due to your feelings as to make this present?"

"Do not laugh at me—oh! don't," entreated Nettie; "I thought Grace was fond of me, and it seemed so hard, so cold!"

"Grace is fond of you, and she is neither hard nor cold. What did she say?"

"You can see her letter, if you care to read it," Nettie answered; and she went into the next room and fetched Miss Moffat's epistle.

It was a simple, loving scrawl—Grace wrote an abominable hand—and told how earnestly the writer hoped Nettie would be happy, and how she wished she could go and see her, and how she sent a little token by which Nettie would know she was not forgotten; and how, thinking there must be many things Nettie might want to buy in the way of dress, she enclosed her some money, which she hoped Nettie would take from her as if she was her sister.

Nothing could have been more tenderly or delicately worded—there was not a sentence, not a syllable in the letter which could have given offence to any one who happened to be in a better frame of mind than was Mrs. Brady's case when she received it.

Never before, Mrs. Hartley felt, had she quite appreciated Grace Moffat. Certainly there was a sweetness and softness about her mentally which Nettie lacked.

"You did not stand in need of this money," she said, folding up the letter and returning it, "or else you never could have resented a kindness so gracefully offered, or the feeling which prompted that kindness. What was the amount of her enclosure?"

"Fifty pounds," answered Nettie, slowly and reluctantly.

"Upon my word, Miss Grace, when you come into your own, you will do things right royally!" remarked Mrs. Hartley. She was astonished at the idea of Miss Moffat proffering such a sum, and yet while blaming the girl's reckless generosity, as she privately styled it, she was touched by it sensibly. Middle-aged people, who, having learned the value of money, look at a shilling twice before they spend sixpence, are not always displeased at the spectacle of a lavish liberality on the part of young folks. Nevertheless, she intended to remonstrate with Miss Moffat, to point out the evil and folly of her pecuniary ways, and read her a lecture, which she well knew beforehand would be answered with many an "Ah, no!" and "Dear Mrs. Hartley," and

"Well, but," and earnest excuse and playful protest, uttered by that soft, sweet, stealing voice which was—the Englishwoman confessed it with shame—almost reconciling her to the Irish accent.

"If you really do not require the money, Nettie, I should return the whole or part of it," said Mrs. Hartley, forgetful apparently of the statement Mrs. Brady had made when the subject of Grace was first broached.

"I cannot," Nettie answered.

"What, spent it all already!"

"No," she replied; "I have given it away," and once again the tell-tale colour flamed in Nettie's cheeks.

No good purpose was to be served in continuing that conversation, so Mrs. Hartley immediately guessed, and changed it.

"Grace has refused John Riley," she began.

"So I hear."

"How did you hear it?"

"John told me, and I am very sorry. I did not say I was sorry to Grace because she might not believe me, but I am. She will never meet with any person one half so fond of her for herself as John."

"I agree with you there," said Mrs. Hartley briskly; "but why do you imagine Grace would not have believed you felt sorry, if you told her you did?"

"Oh! because I used to be foolish about things," answered Nettie, looking straight down the dreary expanse of uncarpeted floor that stretched between her and the other end of the room.

"About what things?" asked Mrs. Hartley.

"About lovers and husbands, and other nonsense of that sort," Nettie replied, as if she were five hundred years old. "I thought no girl *could* care for a man unless he was handsome; and John is not handsome, you know. You remember the saying, Mrs. Hartley, that it is better to be 'good than bonny.' I did not believe anybody could be good who was not bonny. I have learned better since then."

Mrs. Hartley did not care to inquire "since when?" so she merely remarked,—

"You were therefore, I suppose, always influencing Grace against him?"

"She did not need any influencing," was the calm reply.

"She did not care for him—not—not in that way, and she did think he wanted her money as much as herself; perhaps he did, he has not much of his own to spare; and then she met Mr. Somerford, and he took her fancy with his playing and singing, and talk about painting, and rubbish of that sort. No," added Nettie abruptly, reverting to the question of Miss Moffat's rejected lover, "we did not often speak about John. She always said she never intended to marry any one; and of course I had to listen, and seem to believe her."

"You did not think she expressed her real intention, then?" suggested Mrs. Hartley.

"I am not sure. I think Grace is likely enough to stay single all her days, unless she marries Mr. Somerford, or some person like him; and I hope she will not marry Mr. Somerford, I do, from my heart."

"Why, Nettie?"

"Because I do not think he is good enough for her. He has nothing inside his head excepting selfishness and the roots of his curly-black hair," criticised Mrs. Brady, whose ideas on the subject of physiology were vague in the extreme.

Mrs. Hartley laughed. Disparagement of that handsome scion of a worthless stock was very music to her ears.

"And besides," proceeded Nettie, "I am certain Grace would never be happy, stuck up amongst the peerage. I know she and the countess are now never separate; but she must be a greatly altered girl if she cares very much for being intimate with the nobility. However, there is no knowing," finished the speaker sententiously. "I suppose we are none of us exactly what we seem," and blue eyes and golden curls relapsed into reverie.

"Where is your husband?" inquired Mrs. Hartley, after a moment's pause. She had hoped to see him, and she did not wish to end her visit without doing so.

"Mr. Brady," said Nettie (it was a noticeable feature in the young wife's conversation that since the day when General Riley and his son came upon her, standing by the broken sun-dial, she had never spoken of her husband as such, or addressed or referred to him by his Christian name); "Oh! he has gone down the Lough as far as Port Clune, to look at some cattle he is thinking of buying. It saves ten or twelve miles going by water instead of round

the headlands; but he cannot be back before the evening. I am sorry it has so happened; he will be grieved to have missed you."

It struck Mrs. Hartley that although Mr. Brady might possibly be grieved, Mrs. Brady was certainly not sorry; but she was rising to take her leave, taking Nettie's statement apparently for granted, when the door opened, and the person of whom they had been speaking walked in.

At sight of a visitor he hesitated for a moment, then came across the room and said how glad he was to see Mrs. Hartley, how proud to make her acquaintance.

"I did not know any one was here," he added (which must have been a mere figure of speech, since he had seen Mrs. Hartley's car, and learned from the servant to whom it belonged), "or I should not have appeared before you in such a plight."

"Where have you been? what have you been doing?" inquired his wife.

"I have been in the water," he replied, "bringing Lady Glendare back to land. She got out of her depth, or caught by a current, or something of that sort, and would most likely have been part of her way back to England by this time, had we not happened to be passing."

"You ought to change your clothes at once," remarked Mrs. Hartley, practical and unemotional as ever.

"There is no hurry," answered Mr. Brady, laughing. "Mr. Moffat insisted on my taking an internal antidote against cold; and, besides, salt water never hurts anybody."

"And the countess?" inquired Nettie.

"Oh! there is not much the matter with her beyond fright. She was terrified. Miss Moffat, I suspect, has not come off so well. She was sitting at the door of the bathing-box, when Lady Glendare's maid screamed, and in one moment (by George I never saw anything so quick or so well done in my life) she was out along the rocks (how she kept her footing I cannot imagine), and made one leap after her ladyship. I was near the countess by that time, and Calpin had rowed in shore, so we saved them both; but Miss Moffat is hurt, I know, though she will not confess it. What a girl that is!" finished Mr. Brady reflectively; "what a spirit she has! The first words she said to the countess, as Calpin and I were carrying her ladyship up to Bayview, were, 'Of course there is no fear of the election

now?' I rather fancy the election was a matter of secondary importance to Lady Glendare at that moment; but Miss Moffat was right, nevertheless."

Mrs. Hartley looked straight at Mr. Brady while he uttered the foregoing sentence. He was a handsome man, no one could deny that; handsome after his kind; and there was really nothing in the words spoken calculated to annoy any one. But there was a manner about him that offended the lady's taste. More especially she hated the tone in which he alluded to Grace; and she felt angry with Grace for having made any remark capable of repetition in the presence of such a person.

"I am certain that your husband ought not to be standing here in his wet clothes," she said, turning to Nettie. "If you name an evening when you and Mr. Brady can come and take a cup of tea with me, I will not intrude any longer upon you to-day."

"I do not think," Nettie was beginning, when Mr. Brady interrupted her,—

"Annette and I have not so many engagements, Mrs. Hartley, that we need hesitate about accepting yours," he said. "Any evening which suits you will be agreeable to us."

"Thursday, then?" suggested the lady.

"Thursday, with many thanks," he replied.

"You know what that means, I suppose?" remarked Nettie, when he returned, after helping Mrs. Hartley into her car. "She does not want us to call when we might meet other visitors, but asks us to tea when she will take good care to have nobody there."

Nettie had not lived behind the scenes of high life in Kingslough for nothing.

"Never mind," returned her husband, "it is the thin edge of the wedge;" and he went out to state to some of his astonished labourers that he wanted the drive weeded, gravelled, and rolled, and that they were to set about putting it in order immediately.

CHAPTER XIII.

COMING EVENTS.

Nothing but the desire of annoying Mrs. Somerford could have reconciled Lady Glendare to the bi- or tri- weekly dip with which she sought, and not unsuccessfully, to increase the earl's popularity amongst the Whigs of Kingslough and its dependencies.

Ninon de l'Enclos, we are assured, preserved her beauty by a plentiful use of water; but then that was rain water, and not salt, used also in privacy and under comfortable, not to say luxurious, circumstances; and besides, she was an exception to most rules,—certainly, if she pinned her faith to water pure and simple as a conservator of good looks, an exception to one.

As for Lady Glendare, she never made a secret of her antipathy to what she styled the horrid and indecent practice of bathing in the sea. Exclusive in all her ideas, a Tory in every turn of her mind except as regarded the politics she professed, Lady Glendare looked upon soap and water, more especially water, as methods of cleansing intended by Providence for those poor and busy persons who had little time to spend upon their toilettes, and less money to devote to the accessories of the dressing-table. She might indeed, so great was her objection to all ordinary modes of ablution, have been the original of that mother who, when she left her daughters at school, begged they should on no pretence be permitted to wash their faces.

"A silk handkerchief," she suggested, "carefully passed over the skin, being sufficient for the purpose, and rendering injury to the complexion impossible."

And, indeed, at a time when "making up" was rather an art than a science, ere chemistry had exhausted its resources to provide a new bloom, and invention had outstripped imagination in order to confer beauties previously undreamed of, the indiscriminate use of so plebeian a fluid as water could not fail to be attended with accidents, not to say danger.

The rule was then, as now, to improve nature as much as

possible, but the process by which all this was accomplished seems to our modern ideas clumsy and tedious.

It is almost a pity that some of the great-grandmothers of our present sirens who likewise, and at great trouble and expense, tired their heads and darkened their eyes and beautified their complexions, cannot come to life again and behold all the pretty inventions by which much more effective and deceptive results are now attained.

As the steam-engine is to horse-power so are the devices of women now to those employed by their progenitors in the old days departed. The worst of it is that beauty, by reason of its universality, will soon be at a discount. Time was when, unless a lady were young and fair by the grace of God, she had to be rich and idle before she could counterfeit His gifts. Now loveliness can be had on the most reasonable terms; a complexion is cheaper than a chignon, and large eyes with the iris distended at high noon can be matched with real hair a dozen shades lighter than it appeared a week previously, for the expenditure of a few pence.

Things were not so when Lady Glendare came to Bayview, "for the benefit of the salt water," so ran the simple phrase in that primitive age.

People "took salt water" externally then as they might have taken a solution of sulphuretted hydrogen internally. Some strong-minded old persons and some light-minded young ones really liked the operation; but taking society round, it shivered on the brink and went in for its "three dips and out again," actuated either by a strong feeling of duty or a stronger dread of being laughed at. In a word, the sea was a medicine, and regarded as such.

Lady Glendare considered it a medicine she personally did not require, but she took it to benefit her lord and spite her sister-in-law. Many a wry face she made over the dose to Grace: and Grace, when she beheld her ladyship tripping down the ladder, pitied her, as she might a poor wretch going up one on a different errand.

Not but that sea-bathing at Bayview was, as far as it could be made so, an eminently comfortable affair. Grace was one of those fanatics who dipped in season and out, for whom rough weather had no terrors, winter rather charms than otherwise, and her box was therefore the perfection of a dressing-room by the sea.

The usual mode of procedure at Kingslough, which indeed

I have seen adopted in more northern latitudes within the last few years, and considered charmingly primitive and easy, if slightly uncomfortable by reason of wind and sand, was to undress on the shore, flinging on a green or blue baize gown to conceal the operation. Those who were so fortunate as to own "back entrances," disrobed themselves within four walls and slipped quietly into the water, as, indeed, did others whose houses faced the shore, and who, watching their opportunity, rushed across the road enveloped in cloaks, which they flung off at the water's edge, and then went out to sea as calmly as though they had been fishes bred and born.

Perhaps Lady Glendare was right, perhaps the whole system might be accounted barbarous; but it is open to question whether the bathing-machine régime, which jolts a poor shivering wretch over stones and shingles, only to land her finally in six inches of water, imagined sufficient to conceal her and her meagre serge dress from profane eyes, is superior in any way.

However, there were no bathing-machines at Kingslough then (it is possible Kingslough may have adopted them now), and failing such and such like devices, the Countess of Glendare was fain to put up with the accommodation afforded by Miss Moffat's box.

For many reasons Miss Moffat took her pleasure in the deep at other hours than those affected by the countess. Right glad would her ladyship have been of her company in the water; but Grace judged, and judged rightly, that on those mysteries of the toilette which were enacted with closed doors and in solemn silence, the scrutiny of youthful eyes was not desired.

Any change in the arrangement of her ladyship's hair was hidden, as she stepped out of the box, by that most hideous of all headgear, an oil-skin bathing-cap; and if, in the momentary glance which was all that even by accident Grace caught of her guest's face as, followed by her maid, she went to perform her penance, it looked older and whiter than had been the case an hour previously, still that proved nothing.

Her ladyship had been a beauty, and was beautiful even yet. If she chose to put back the years and look younger than chanced to be actually the case, that was entirely her affair, and Grace had sense enough to know the countess

felt no desire to reveal the secret means whereby such wonderful results were obtained.

As regarded the maid, she consented to bathe, as she would have consented to anything else which was duly considered in her wages.

After all, going into the sea could not by any stretch of the imagination be considered a greater hardship than coming to Ireland.

Ireland was an extra, and so was bathing, or, to speak more correctly, following Lady Glendare into the water and assisting her to bathe. Mrs. Somerford wondered how her sister-in-law could think of making such an exhibition of herself; but the exhibition was rapidly restoring the earl's popularity. Her ladyship's condescension—so the fact of her going into the sea at all was styled—had given a greater fillip to Kingslough than could have been supposed likely. The Ardmornes had tried being popular, but Lady Glendare beat them at their own game, and the finishing stroke of being within an ace of drowning settled, as Grace prophesied it would, the fate of the Tory candidate.

Certainly, could Kingslough have chosen, it would not have selected Mr. Brady for her ladyship's rescuer.

It grudged such a piece of good fortune to a man of his standing and antecedents; but still, had he not chanced to be at hand when the countess got out of her depth, and her maid lost whatever presence of mind she ever possessed, and stood shrieking helplessly, while Grace ran the risk of being carried out to sea likewise in her mad endeavour to render assistance,—had Mr. Brady, I say, not been near enough to render efficient help then, Kingslough would have lost both Miss Moffat and the stranger within her gates. And Kingslough was not ungrateful; more especially as the earl, moved no doubt by hints from his agent, and very plain speaking on the part of Mr. Robert Somerford, confined his thanks, so far as anybody knew, to an early visit.

Nettie and her husband were not taken into high favour at Rosemont. They were, it is true, like everybody else, asked to the election ball, but Mr. and Mrs. Brady had sense enough to stay away.

The world did not know that a grateful husband had asked in which direction Mr. Brady's wishes lay, so that he might advance them, and that Lady Glendare had told Nettie she could answer for herself and her children that they would

never, never forget the obligation under which Mr. Brady had laid them.

There were a great many things Mr. Brady wanted which it was in Lord Glendare's power to give; but although he knew enough of society to be aware a nobleman's memory for benefits conferred is about as short as that of other people, he contented himself, for the time being, with having "got his foot in."

It might be or it might not be that hereafter the earl would have the opportunity of serving him disinterestedly, but he was well aware that once he was in a position to avail himself of his opportunities, he could make it serve Lord Glendare's purpose to advance his views.

The world was before him—and it was an advantage that his world now included an acquaintance with the owner of Rosemont, and something which amounted almost to the right of speaking or writing to him without the intervention of any one, whether agent or lawyer.

Mr. Brady hated lawyers, which was all the more natural since lawyers, even his own, hated him.

Looking around, this man saw that nearly every rising fortune, and almost every fortune that was secure in Kingslough, owed its foundation to some stone rent from the ruins of the Glendare prosperity. Any one whose property was unencumbered—any one who was getting on in the world, any one whose father and grandfather having been nobodies was consequently educating his children to become somebodies, owed the whole of their advancement to the need or the improvidence of the Glendares.

Any man clever enough to obtain their ear, and patient enough to wait his opportunity, any one unscrupulous as to making terms, and wise enough to have those terms made binding, could get an advantage over the Somerfords, could clear his own way to wealth, while lending a hand to help them along the road to ruin.

Not that they needed any help; they found the road easy to travel, if occasionally not over pleasant.

To use a phrase which has become common of late in connection with business failures, "They were bound to go;" and to pursue the same simile, all that wise men thought of in relation to them was how to get as much money, or money value, as possible out of them before the crash came.

Unsophisticated people, who had always been hearing of the embarrassments of each successive earl, thought there must be a wonderful vitality about the Somerfords' affairs, and concluded rashly, that what had been apparently from the beginning must go on to the end; but these were persons who forgot, on the one hand, the first enormous extent of the property, and, on the other, the fact that a man rolling down hill gains a frantic speed as he nears the bottom.

"I do not know why I should grudge Glendare this triumph," said Lord Ardmorne, looking askance at grapes which he would fain have made believe to think sour; "he will never see his nominee sent to Parliament again."

And the Marquis was right. When the next election took place Mr. Robert Somerford, who contested the seat himself, was beaten, not ignominiously, perhaps, but sufficiently.

From which remark of his fellow-peer, it will be understood that the Earl had the happiness of seeing a Whig returned for the family seat. The fight was fierce, the contest close, the expense great, but the Glendare interest won.

How far my lady contributed to this result can only be surmised; how far sympathy carried the voters is also problematical. One thing only is certain, that when the general public learned how Lady Glendare, herself still ailing, started at a few hours' notice to see her youngest born, reported dangerously ill, and heard Lord Glendare making his lament about Arthur, whom he loved best of all his children, and called, to those who evinced sorrow (and few there were that failed to do so), the "flower of the flock;" and when further news came that on the very eve of the election the earl was summoned away, told to travel with all speed "if he wished to see his boy alive," the hearts of the people forgot Th' Airl's faults, and remembered only Th' Airl's grief.

Men who had "promised," men who had half consented, men who were undecided, forgot their promises, their semi-agreement, their doubts, and voted to please the earl,

And the result did please him. Though his son lay dead when the news came, he felt gratified, and, for the moment it might be, so far as such a sensation could exist in a Glendare, grateful.

After all, they were not a bad race, a degenerate peasantry, those Irishmen, who despite Lord Ardmorne's

money remained true to the Somerfords and the traditions of their fathers.

They were a staunch tenantry and an honest, who forgot not former benefits, so he mentally styled the renewals of leases, the granting of liberty to pay rent—those sturdy independent men who spoke to him as though he had been one of themselves, and yet who honoured him and his house, who toiled early and late to make up the amount required on "gale days," expressive phrase! and who asked for nothing better than to live and die hard-working paupers on the ground their "forbears" had, personally paupers likewise, cultivated for the benefit of a reckless, faithless, ingrate, doomed race.

Doomed! yes, and justly. They had cumbered the ground for a sufficient period, and the inexorable fiat, "Cut them down!" had gone forth.

Their reign was coming to an end—the reign of the good-natured, handsome, wicked Glendares. They had sprung from the loins of some dare-devil English trooper, and they had not belied their ancestry. It was time for them to depart and give place to another house willing to return to the soil a portion at all events of what it took out of the soil.

But the Glendares, one and all, men and women, were as those in the days of Noe.

They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, and still the waters were creeping up about them, round and about, and when they were engulfed no soul pitied them.

It was coming, it was coming; wise were they who could read the signs of the sky, and foretell the impending tempest, wise in their generation, as are usually the children of this world.

Amongst the wise men were Mr. Dillwyn and Nettie's husband. Of the doings of the former there will be something to state hereafter. He took steps at which all the world wondered, but which at the same time all men could see and comment upon.

Mr. Brady, on the contrary, worked like a mole underround, throwing up here a mound and there another, that might have conveyed a hint to observant eyes.

But the eyes were wanting. Society at Kingslough was not clever at addition. Scandal, being presumably feminine,

is generally deficient in its ability to solve abstruse arithmetrical problems.

Kingslough, therefore, with whom Mr. Brady did not intermeddle, put Mr. Brady on one side and left him at leisure to work out his plans.

What those plans were, even Nettie, with all her quick perception and intuitive knowledge of other folks' designs, failed fully to understand. She comprehended that her husband, like the rest of his countrymen, had a passion for the possession of land, a passion not second even to his love of money; but her imagination never grasped the fact that already he had formed a scheme to get the Woodbrook mortgage into his own hands, and the thing he most fervently hoped for was that he might be able to achieve his purpose before the General died.

The idea had entered his mind more in the form of a vague wish than a practicable scheme, on that day when John Riley and his father refused his proferred hand; but he had since brooded over the plan, moulded it into shape, and resolved to carry it into effect.

He knew he could ruin the Rileys. It became in his mind a mere question of time, for now that Miss Moffat had refused to cast in her lot with the family, not even a hope remained of ultimate extrication. The more rapidly the world went on—and the world had begun in those days to show signs of quicker movement—the more certainly were the Rileys doomed to destruction; but he felt that his revenge would lose half its sweetness if he failed to carry out his design in the General's lifetime.

Already his fancy portrayed the old man leaving the house and lands he had struggled so gallantly and so unavailingly to retain. Already he pictured the daughters governesses, the father and mother living poorly in some cheap house in Kingslough, the son's exertions being taxed to provide for the necessities of his family.

Such reverses had been over and over again, such a reverse should be enacted once more.

"Had the Rileys," he said to himself, but said falsely, though perhaps unconscious of his self-deceit, "had the Rileys recognized Nettie and received me, I would have forgiven them their insolence, and helped them to build up their fortunes once again."

So he said, so possibly he thought; but the experience of

all time tending to prove that a known enemy is better than a false friend, the Rileys, in the impulse of their indignation at Nettie's choice, acted probably as well for themselves as they would have done had they gone into a series of worldly calculations and ordered their conduct accordingly.

Mr. Brady might be a rising man in a pecuniary sense, people soon began to say he was, but the Rileys were of one rank and sort and he of another, and there can be no greater folly than for one in a higher station to suppose that a person who is trying to creep up to the same station will serve him faithfully either for love or interest.

So after John's departure there was a dead break between Woodbrook and Maryville, and if Nettie had found her life in Kingslough monotonous, she probably found it—except so far as her husband's tempers diversified the routine—more monotonous still in her new home.

But how she fared in that new home, whether well or the reverse, no one could tell. Few ever saw her, to none did she give her confidence.

Even the Castle Farm beheld her no more. In the early days of her marriage she wandered over two or three times, in the vague hope, perhaps, of meeting Grace; but Mr. Brady, hearing of these visits, expressed his disapproval, and Nettie silently obeyed his wishes in that as in all other matters.

Perhaps, indeed, after a few sentences she and her husband exchanged one day, she felt little inclination to listen to Mrs. Scott's hopeful talk about the future, her cheerful gossip concerning their plans and expectations.

"I wonder," said Mr. Brady to his wife, "why Scott is drawing all those stones? It looks as if he meant to build."

"So he does," Nettie answered; "he is going to build a new byre and stable and loft over,"

"He must be mad," remarked Mr. Brady, "to lay out money at the tail-end of his lease."

"The earl has promised him a new one, did not you know that?"

"I heard something about it," said her husband, "but it is all nonsense. The earl has no power to give him a new lease."

"Why?" Nettie inquired.

"I wonder if one could talk for three minutes to any woman without her asking 'Why?'" said Mr. Brady im-

patiently. "It would take me a day to explain the why and the wherefore to you. He can't, and there's an end of it."

Having returned which courteous answer, Mr. Brady walked out of the room with his hands deep in his pockets.

Now the lands of the Castle Farm "marched," to use a local expression, with those of Maryville.

CHAPTER XIV.

SEVEN YEARS AFTER.

HIGH noon once again at Kingslough; high noon, with a leaden sky, a drizzling rain falling, the streets ankle deep in mud, the side paths sloppy and dirty.

Altogether a miserable noon—the sea out a long way, as was its wont to go at Kingslough when low tide-time came; an expanse of grey, sad-looking shore; the water still and sullen; the hills the only bit of colour in the landscape, for the foliage of the fir-trees in the distant woods looked almost black by contrast with the leafless branches amongst which they reared their heads.

No sunlight dancing on the waves; no shifting shadows succeeded by bright patches of brightness coming and going upon the uplands; no mellow haze softening the distance; no purple bloom softening the scene into a dream of fairy-land. At the foot of its hills, Kingslough lay crouching and shivering its houses together; houses in which every blind in the lower windows was drawn close, or the shutters closed, in token of—respect, the people would have said.

Let the word go for what it was worth. It could not now matter to Lord Glendare—in evidence of whose death the weather itself seemed to have put on mourning—whether the men he had ground down into the earth loved or hated, respected or despised, his memory.

He was gone—by the road winding inland, along the Glendare Parade—closely-shut houses on one side, and the dark, bare shore, with the leaden-coloured sea reflecting a leaden sky, on the other—up the steep hillside they were about to bear the mortal remains of the earl to their last earthly home.

Nearly seven years had passed since his previous visit to Ireland, and during that time progress set a weak, uncertain foot, even in Kingslough.

Men had arisen who, first from whispering doubts of the Glendare infallibility, gradually grew bolder, and at length openly proclaimed the new doctrine, that property has its duties, and that the human being, be he of gentle birth or of simple, to whom many talents have been given, must account some day for the use made of those talents, if not at any human tribunal, before the throne of God.

To those who had been accustomed to regard themselves as relieved from all responsibility by the act of God Himself; who believed in the divine right of landlords to do what they liked with their own; who had never regarded the people save as so much raw material, out of which rent and renewal fines were to be extracted—easily and kindly if possible—with difficulty and harshness should necessity arise; to those, in a word, who, like the Glendares, had been living on the edge of a social precipice, the increasing murmurs of discontent fell on their ears as a sound of impossible, yet uncomfortable, prophecy.

They had been Glendares since the time of that careless, selfish English trooper; they had been great people; they had lived on the fat of the land; they had ruffled it with the best; the fairest women had smiled upon them; men of rank equal to their own, of better birth, of stricter principles, had condoned the faults and sins of their false, bad race, for the sake of the charms of person and the grace of manner which distinguished all of the name; and could it be—could it that an end was to come to the pleasant vices paid for by the sweat of toiling peasants, the prematurely old faces of anxious wives, the feeble though willing work of little children, who were turned out of their cradles into the fields to help to make up the rent?

Had noon come and gone, and were the evening shadows already darkening the fair landscape? Was the day in which their fellows greeted them with smiles, and paid them honour, drawing to an end, and a night, dark and starless, closing in around a House which had ruled despotically for so long and so ill.

As is usual, the signs of the times were first made apparent in increased difficulties of obtaining money on credit. So to speak, the murmurs of dissatisfaction grew into words, which

could be distinguished by the ears of the earl, if by no other members of the family.

Never had a Glendare been so deeply involved in debt as he; never had a Glendare been so short of that which should enable him to clear his debts, even temporarily. One generation had gone on pushing its burdens on the next. Long leases, sometimes for nine hundred and ninety-nine years, had been granted by successive proprietors at disastrously small rents, for the sake of a "lump sum down," which sum vanished like "snow off a dyke." Lands had been sold, rights conceded. Amongst everything available with which the Glendares could part had been leased or sold or mortgaged.

Fortunes had been made out of streams, moors, building-sites, houses, and farms the Glendares had parted with, under the pressure of importunate creditors, for an old song.

No young sprig of nobility ever made worse bargains with professed money-lenders than successive earls with men who were wise enough to take advantage of the Somerford necessities. Agent after agent had fattened on the spoil; some of them, catching the infection of their betters, spent their money recklessly and came again, or their families after them, to indigence. Some went to England and did well there; others, again, bought properties in distant parts of Ireland, and set up in the land-owning business for themselves; all, at any rate—however they spent their money—had a pull out of the Glendare purse, as the state of the Glendare purse could testify.

The mismanagement, the profuse expenditure, the eating the calf before birth, the depredations of outsiders, had continued for a long time, but it was impossible the game could be carried on for ever.

The end was coming; the murmurs of a once voiceless people, rising at length into a hoarse low cry of discontent, reached even to London, and, together with the remonstrances of lawyers and agents and the demands and entreaties of duns, told the earl that, unless he and his reformed their ways, reduced their outgoings and came down a little from their high estate, they would have to sink altogether, and drop a title and a rank they had no longer wealth to maintain.

"It is hard upon me in my old age," said the earl to himself with that self-pity which would be ludicrous were it

not almost pathetic, which those who have never showed pity to others always extend to themselves—"old, broken, weighed down by trouble, with one foot in the grave"—but here the soliloquy ended. The ideas it expressed seemed too true to form pleasant food even for self-pity. The years "few and evil" were drawing to a close, and the prospect of having both feet laid in the grave was as little agreeable to his lordship as it proves to most of those who have loved this world, its sins, its pomps, and its pleasures passing well.

"It all began when Arthur went," he said one day to Lady Glendare; and certainly, since the death of his favourite son, trouble and the earl had not walked on different sides of life's highway. Petty annoyances, grave anxieties, family trials, succeeded each other as though all were part of a giant army gathered to annihilate an enemy.

Save Henry—the heir—he was childless, and one of his sons had before his departure dragged even the Glendare name through such disreputable places that the world could scarcely put on a show of decent sympathy with his parents when his career was cut short.

Henry the earl did not love—or loved, to speak more correctly, after the fashion in which men usually love those who are born to wear their shoes after them—and Henry had not much affection to spare for his father.

Nevertheless, he had been ready enough to join him in granting leases, and cutting off part of the entail, until he discovered that far more than the lion's portion of the spoil was finding its way into the earl's pocket.

Some one enlightened that over-wise young man on this point; my lady declared the some one was Robert Somerford, whom she now hated with that impotent hatred only a weak vain woman can entertain towards a man who, through the deaths of her children, stands a few feet nearer rank and wealth; and the result was, that the next time the earl asked his son to join him in some fresh work of destruction, his son flatly refused to do anything of the kind.

"There has been enough of this suicidal policy in the family already," said the young man with an air of withering superiority, "and I for one will be no party to its con tinuance."

"But, Henry, you are as much in want of money as I am, and I only ask you to do for and with me what I did for my father," urged the earl.

"What you may have chosen to do for your father is beside the question," was the reply. "I have quite made up my mind as to the course I intend to take. It is true I am in want of money, but, on the whole, I find the Jews cheaper than your lordship"—

Whereupon his lordship ordered him to leave the house, and there being reasons why London was at that time not so agreeable a residence as it might have been to the future earl, he went to visit his relatives at Rosemont—

Who now consisted, by marriage and otherwise, of Mr. Robert Somerford, Mrs. Somerford translated into Mrs. Dillwyn, and her husband, Mr. Dillwyn.

The news of the proposed matrimonial alliance had electrified Kingslough six years previously. That Mr. Dillwyn should propose! that Mrs. Somerford should consent!—so the sentences of wonderment ran, while gossips lifted their hands—whilst ladies eligible as to spinsterhood, though not equally so as to age, wondered what the agent could be thinking about to marry a woman older than himself, and she a widow—whilst men shook their heads and said, "Dillwyn was not born yesterday."

"What will the earl do under the circumstances?" people inquired—meaning, Would the earl dismiss his agent, or receive him into the bosom of the Glendare family? would he give the bride-elect notice to leave Rosemont, or would he ask her and the bridegroom to spend part of the honeymoon in London?

Popular opinion inclined to the belief that Mr. Dillwyn would have to leave his situation and deliver up his papers, and had Lady Glendare's wishes been followed, a line hard and fast had then been drawn between the earl and the occupants of Rosemont; but her wishes were not followed, and not only was Mrs. Somerford allowed to remain at Rosemont, but Mr. Dillwyn was permitted to take up his abode there with her.

He offered to pay a rent for the mansion and grounds, and, to his secret satisfaction, Lord Glendare accepted his offer. When Henry Lord Trevor came of age, almost one of his first acts was, with his father, to grant a long lease of Rosemont to the agent.

"But remember, Dillwyn, Rosemont is still to be our home when we come to Ireland," said the earl; and Mr. Dillwyn agreed, nothing loth.

He had counted the cost of his plan before carrying it into practice, and the cost included maintaining his noble relatives on the few occasions they might choose to honour Ireland with their company.

As for Mr. Robert Somerford, he did not like Mr. Dillwyn, but he did not dislike the match. It gave him a much more comfortable home than had hitherto fallen to his lot, money in his purse, power to travel, and, to a certain extent, maintain his proper position in the world.

There were pecuniary ease and comparative affluence amongst the trio who lived there.

Mr. Dillwyn was well to do, and carefully trying to be better, but he acted towards his stepson with a liberality which at last elicited some astonished, if not grateful, remark from the younger man.

"It is not right you should be mewed up in a remote country house through the best years of your life," answered Mr. Dillwyn; "you ought to see the world, and become fitted for a position beyond that of a mere dependent. It is on the cards you may one day be Earl of Glendare yourself."

With an amazement too swift and genuine to be assumed, Mr. Somerford, looking eagerly in the agent's face, asked him what he meant.

"Precisely what I say," answered Mr. Dillwyn. "Count your chances, and see what stands between you and the title."

There was a pause; then Mr. Somerford, having presumably counted the chances, and found them in his favour, said,—

"You calculated on this when you married my mother."

"I did, Mr. Somerford," was the reply, as calmly uttered as though there had been no sting contained in the sentence, no scorn in the tone. "A man must marry for something—love, money, interest. Your mother married me because she was sick of existing on her wretched pittance of a jointure, because she believed I might assist you. I married her because I had reasons to believe you might one day be able to serve me; because I knew the match must strengthen my position with the earl. There was no question of love in the matter, no pretence of anything beyond respect;" and Mr. Dillwyn stopped, thinking evidently his stepson ought to be perfectly satisfied with the explanation vouchsafed.

But Mr. Somerford's vanity had received a blow which a

much longer and more plausible explanation might have failed to soothe.

He had thought, honestly and sincerely, that the honour of an alliance with a member of his family was more than an equivalent for Mr. Dillwyn's good looks, comparative youth, unquestionable ability, and wealth acquired—no one exactly understood how; and now to be told that, instead of an open, the man had been playing an underhand, game—with himself as probable ace of trumps hidden up his sleeve all the time—was more than he could endure.

"So that was your motive?" he began quietly, drawing in his breath at the end of his sentence, as the wind lulls for a moment before the storm breaks forth in its fury.

With all their amiability the Somerfords had tempers, and knew on occasions how to exhibit them; and the years spent in association with the family had not been passed by Mr. Dillwyn altogether in vain.

Well, at any rate, he understood what the lowering of Mr. Robert's voice and the compression of his lips portended, and so hastened to avert the threatened hurricane.

"I have shown you my hand," he began. "Do not let us quarrel about the honours I hold till we are quite sure they will win. Do not speak that which is in your mind unless you are satisfied it will be to your interest to quarrel with me. I tell you it is your interest to keep me as your friend. If the Glendare estates, or any part of them, are to be saved, which is problematical, I am the only person who can tell you how to save them. If without the estates you are ever to keep your head above water, I am the only person able to show you the way."

"I ought to be the last person to question your ability to compass anything on which you set your mind," said Mr. Somerford, "but I do not feel at all disposed to allow you to exercise your talents in the management of my affairs."

"When you have affairs to manage, it will be time enough to discuss that question," retorted the agent. "Meanwhile, if I did make a throw for fortune and position, remember what I staked upon it. I burdened myself—I use the word advisedly, Robert—with a young man utterly destitute, with a lady worthy of all esteem, but no longer even in the prime of middle life, while between you and the possibility of the title stood how many? The Glendares, I believe, always expect people to give them something for nothing; to waste

their health, strength, money, in the unselfish desire to give them pleasure; but if you have taken up any false ideas of that kind with regard to me, disabuse your mind of it as fast you can. It is of no use scowling. I will work with you or against you; only say whether we are to be friends or foes, and I will order my course accordingly.

"You are wondrous plain, sir, all of a sudden," said Mr. Somerford with a sneer.

"I am wondrous true, considering the nature of the man to whom I am speaking," replied Mr. Dillwyn.

"There is no necessity for you to favour me with an analysis of my character," replied the younger man; "I think we understand each other without going into particulars. It seems we must row together, or swim separate. Is not that the English of the confidence you have forced upon me? Yes; well, that being the case, and having no taste for salt water, I agree to let bygones be bygones, and take my chance with you."

"Meaning that we are to be friends?"

"If you attach any importance to the expression, yes."

"Will you give me your hand upon it?"

"Having given my word, I should have imagined the other form unnecessary; but as you wish——" and he held out his hand, which Mr. Dillwyn clasped hard for a moment. Then he loosed it, saying, "That is a bargain."

"Agreed," answered Mr. Somerford carelessly; and he went off, humming an opera air.

"I would not give much for my hopes if you were once king," muttered the agent, as he watched his retreating figure. "Drivelling idiots all—cruel, selfish, vain, inconsequent fools—earl, heir, nephew. What could his mother have been thinking of when she brought such a short-sighted simpleton into a world already overweighted with simpletons? Well, forewarned forearmed, and when it comes to a stand-up fight between us we shall see which man has best made ready for battle. He has gone to Bayview I suppose. Ah, Grace! you had better have taken me. Even if he comes to be earl, you will find a coronet cannot compensate for the want of both head and heart."

Whereby hung a tale—one never enlarged upon by Grace Moffat. After she refused her first lover, she never took man, woman, or child into her full confidence about those who came after.

It was to this united household Henry Lord Trevor, after the unpleasantness with his father, came. Sympathy in abundance he received from all the inmates of Rosemont, to say nothing of that which he valued far more than sympathy—a considerable pecuniary advance from Mr. Dillwyn, who, playing in those days for high stakes, could not afford to be over-cautious in his game.

On the whole, the heir-apparent did not dislike Ireland; the almost fulsome affection displayed by the tenantry, who, growing weary of the old *régime*, trusted that the "young lord, bless him!" would reduce their rents, and find money for improvements, was not unpleasant to one of a family to whom popularity was as the sunshine and the breeze to mankind in general.

He would not have been a Glendare had he not promised liberally, and thus he charmed the people, and they pleased him. A better shot than his cousin—a more indefatigable sportsman—he traversed the moors and walked over the hills in search of game. All in vain, knowing what he knew, Mr. Dillwyn tried to keep him within bounds (the life of this young man had suddenly become precious in his eyes); he would not be stayed; and so, with the seeds of a fatal disease lying in his frame, he exposed himself to rain and storm, and trudged miles through mists that were as the very breath of death to a constitution such as his.

By Mr. Dillwyn's advice the breach with Lord Glendare was closed. At his dictation the heir wrote a letter of apology for the expressions of which he had made use. After stating how deeply he regretted having permitted temper to overcome his filial respect, he proceeded to say that, whilst his views concerning the general impolicy of granting long leases at nominal rents for the sake of raising amounts utterly nonequivalent to the benefits conferred, remained unaltered, still, if any plan were thought of by which the father's difficulties could be permanently lessened, he would do all in his power to assist in carrying it into effect. "For myself," he went on, "I have already experienced so much of the ill effects of running into debt, that I feel as though I could make any sacrifice to set our affairs straight. I should not object even to take up my residence permanently in Ireland—(he had been a week in the country, and game was plentiful)—if it were thought desirable for me to do so. Dillwyn believes a considerable amount might be raised by granting

leases for a certain term to those of the tenants who hold their land on lives. There has been such a mortality amongst the members of our family lately, that a feeling of uneasiness is abroad, and it seems probable that even those persons to whom fresh leases of this description have been granted since I came of age would willingly pay a further sum to have their tenancy placed upon a more secure footing. I may mention one case in illustration of this. Since I arrived here, Mr. Brady, to whom you may recollect we granted a lease of the Castle Farm, Scott's tenancy of which expires at the death of Lady Jane Somerford, has called to say he is prepared to pay any amount Dillwyn may consider fair, if we will change the lease from three lives to ninety-nine years. Evidently he does not think our space of existence likely to extend to the same term as that of her ladyship."

The last sentence was not, it is unnecessary to say, prompted by Mr. Dillwyn. He was not given to sentimentality; nevertheless a grave pity darkened his eyes as the young man laughingly read it aloud.

"Old ladies have a wonderful knack of living," he went on. "Now there is that Miss Riley; she must have been a hundred, twenty years ago."

"I do not know her age," Mr. Dillwyn answered; "but Lady Jane Somerford was ninety-six last June. She has had her share of the Glendare revenues, no matter who else may have gone short."

"I wonder who invented life-leases," remarked the other thoughtfully.

"Some one who liked speculating himself, and understood the love for speculation, which is an integral part of human nature."

"But our tenants' human nature appears eminently non-speculative," was the reply.

"As the world grows older, its inhabitants get wiser," said Mr. Dillwyn. He could have told his auditor that there would be little of a speculative character in taking a lease on his life, at all events! but the agent's rule had always been to try to make things pleasant, and he was not going to deviate from it now.

"He may live; who knows?" reflected Mr. Dillwyn; "in a warm climate he might last for years; but, whether he live or die, if only the earl agree to my scheme Mr. Robert will

find he had better not have tried to play a double game with me."

From which remark it will be seen that the agent's Christianity did not extend so far as the forgiveness of injuries inflicted or contemplated.

As for the Earl, he was only too happy to accept the olive-branch held out by his son; and as the course suggested by Mr. Dillwyn offered a chance of raising some money, he came over to Ireland in person to carry it with greater expedition into effect.

Glad enough was he to leave London and its duns behind him for a season, and, crouching over the library-fire at Rosemont, a bent and broken man, he assured Mr. Dillwyn, even with tears, that if any arrangement could be made which might enable him to end his days in peace, he would live anywhere—he would do anything—he would induce her ladyship to do anything for the sake of obtaining peace.

"It has been all wrong from beginning to end," he declared, with a frankness characteristic of those who, having eaten up the whole of their cake at once, lament the absence of any hoard from which another may be obtained. "It has been all a mistake. I ought to have retrenched years ago; I ought to have come here, or lived abroad. Take warning by me, Henry, and remember that an extravagant youth means a miserable old age. Life seemed very happy once—ah! that was a long, long time ago. If I could but have the past to spend over again, with my present experience——"

"You would make just as bad a business of your second existence as you have done of your first," thought Mr. Dillwyn, while he publicly observed "that regrets were worse than useless; that what they had now to consider was, how to surmount present difficulties."

"By the way," he went on, "speaking of difficulties, there seems to be one with Scott at the Castle Farm. He says your lordship promised him a renewal of his lease, and that he has spent a mint of money on the place in consequence."

"The Castle Farm! where is it? what is it?" exclaimed the earl pettishly. "I wish, Dillwyn, you would not pester me about matters that lie exclusively in your province. I promise the man a lease? Why should I? And, even if I

had, he must have been an idiot to lay out money until he got it,"

"But he says he gave your lordship money for granting it."

"Now, what nonsense all this is!" cried the earl angrily. "I don't know where the Castle Farm is. I should not know the man Scott if I met him to-morrow. Why should he bring money to me instead of paying it to you? What have I ever had to do with the tenants, except at election times."

"That is the point," persisted Mr. Dillwyn. "He declares he paid you the money when you were over at the time of the last election, and that, therefore, Mr. Brady's lease is invalid."

"He must be a fool," observed the earl in a tone of sincere conviction.

"So I told him," was Mr. Dillwyn's reply.

"He has no lease, has he?" asked the earl.

"None excepting that which expires with the life of Lady Jane Somerford."

"Then what does the fellow mean?"

"That I really cannot say," answered the agent.

"Of course, it is all a trumped-up story," said Lord Somerford.

"Very possibly," agreed Mr. Dillwyn, and the subject dropped.

Next day, when Amos Scott called at the agent's office, that gentleman said to him,——

"Now, look here, Scott—you chose to deal with the earl direct before, and you must settle this matter with him now. I wash my hands of it. I don't understand the transaction, and I don't want to understand it. The earl will be up to his ears in business for a few days, but go to Rosemont, say the early part of next week, and ask to see Lord Trevor. I will beg him to get you speech of his father."

"Yer honour's a hard man, but I thought you would have seen justice done to me," said Amos bitterly.

"I cannot do you justice. I tell you I know no more of the matter than the babe unborn. I will undertake that the earl shall see you; anything more is beyond my power. However it may be, you have not much cause of complaint; Lady Jane has lived twenty-six years longer than the time she ought, and you have had the benefit of her toughness."

"No thanks either to you or my lord," answered Amos Scott with a grim smile.

"Thanks to Providence, who, it is said, takes an especial care of fools," retorted Mr. Dillwyn. "Come up on Tuesday morning about ten o'clock. I will speak to Lord Trevor to-night; that is all I can do for you."

Man proposes, but he cannot dispose. Amos Scott never "had speech" of Louis Lord Glendare, who, before Tuesday came, was lying at Rosemont ill unto death, dying as fast as he knew how.

Physicians came from Dublin; my lady was summoned in all speed from London: but the first said there was "no hope," and the presence of the latter failed to save.

For nearly a fortnight my lord lay unconscious of debt, writs, duns, bailiffs—lay forgetful of his wasted life—of the good he had neglected to do—of the evil he had not failed to perform.

For a moment—only for a moment—at the very last, the light flickered up again.

His son noticed the change, and leaned eagerly forward.

"Arthur," murmured the dying man, thinking of the dead; and that was all—he was Earl of Glendare no more. His son had succeeded to the title.

Following fast on the heels of the physicians came a Dublin undertaker. No expense was to be spared about the funeral; such were the new earl's orders.

For eight whole days, which seemed to the ordinary Irish mind a period almost disreputable, the late earl lay sleeping his last sleep in the home of his ancestors—sleeping so quietly that he might well have dispensed with the watchers, who never left his side by day or by night.

At length the ninth day arrived, that on which he was to be borne to Ballyknock Abbey, when, after the lapse of years, the reader is asked once again to enter Kingslough at high noon.

The town is in mourning; the inhabitants, with a hush of expectation on them, are waiting to behold the spectacle of the "Th' Airl" being carried to his rest.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LAST JOURNEY.

Not even at election-time had the streets of Kingslough and the roads leading into it been so thronged as on the day of Lord Glendare's funeral.

From ten, fifteen, and twenty miles people came to see the sight. From far and near they flocked into the town. Men, old and young; comely women, with babies in their arms; elderly women, so wrinkled and aged that the memory of their childhood must have seemed as a dream to them; girls straight and handsome, with brilliant complexions and, as a rule, luxuriant light hair, came crowding in from the east, and north, and west. Some in jaunting-cars, some in farm-carts, some on the national low-backed car—in which the want of springs was frequently counterbalanced by a feather-bed covered with a patchwork counterpane being laid on the body of the conveyance—most, however, on foot.

Not every day does a nobleman go to his rest, not every day was it given to Kingslough to behold the proud spectacle of a hearse drawn by six horses passing through its streets.

Simple enough were the funerals the little town witnessed as a rule. Quietly and unostentatiously the dead were laid in their graves. Little pomp and many followers, such was the primitive fashion of Kingslough. Amongst the poor, neighbour carried neighbour to that resting-place he was helpless to reach for himself. Amongst the rich, if the distance to the churchyard were great, a hearse was procured from Kilcurragh; but there the black business began and ended. Friends and relations followed in their conveyances; in broughams, chariots, barouches, phaetons, dog-carts, gigs, cars, with an invariable rear of foot-passengers.

At that period of the world's history a man was not allowed to shirk out of the world unnoticed, as if he had done something to be ashamed of. So to speak, his friends accompanied him to the very portals of earth, before they could prevail on themselves to say farewell. The worst fate which could befall a human being was, when he went to the grave, to do so without a "following;" but it did not matter how

unpretentious that following chanced to be. A certain number of persons had shown respect for the dead; that was enough. There had been no apathy, no coldness, no standing aloof. His friends had stuck to him to the last. In driving sleet or blinding snow no one worthy of the name of friend shrank from the performance of the final duty. They followed if the roads were a foot deep in mud, they stood beside the grave with the rain beating down on their covered heads, with the long, rank, wet grass reaching above their ankles.

No single mourning coach preceded by a hearse, feathered as heavily as it might, would have contented that sympathetic population. Without a hearse at all it was possible for a coffin to be carried to the grave; without a coach it was possible to follow the coffin: but it was a thing not to be thought of that any one should be permitted to walk out of this life as through a back-door, unmourned, unattended.

And when this idea of companionship obtained concerning even the poorest of the community, how should sufficient honour be done to the dead earl?

How? the question was easy enough to answer. It resolved itself into a matter of multiplication. Where a commoner had fifties, the peer must have his thousands. In the days to come, when the high-stepping horses, and the sombre velvets, and the waving plumes and all the undertaker's bravery should be forgotten, feeble old crones should still be able to tell their grandchildren of the "grand burying," when the road from Rosemont to Kingslough was lined by spectators who, so soon as the carriages and the horsemen, and the tenantry had passed, became "followers" also; when the ladies, dressed all of them in black, sat at the windows where the blinds were drawn half down, to view the sight; when the tenants chosen for that purpose, all furnished by the new earl with white linen hatbands, and white gloves, "kept the curb," so that the roadway might be clear and unimpeded for the procession; when all the shops were closed, and the town was "like a Sunday;" when the clergy of all denominations—and there were many different sects in Kingslough—had white scarves, ornamented by bows of the best black ribbon, and black kid gloves sent to them; when, for one appearance only, the lion lay down with the lamb, and Father Kelly and Mr. MacRoberts,—who disagreed as heartily as it is possible for

two Christians in name to do, and this is saying enough,—walked demurely side by side; when happy was he or she whose friends lived on the line of route; when the halt, and the deaf, and the blind reaped a rich harvest, and, their pockets full of halfpence, chanted the praises of the departed, of the last Glendare who shall sleep with his ancestors in the old abbey situated so picturesquely on the height overlooking the sea.

It was slow work traversing the weary miles that stretched between Rosemont and Ballyknock Abbey, and the Kingslough gentry had ample time for luncheon before crowding to the windows to look at the show.

All the men, as a matter of course, were either following the *cortége* in carriages or holding in their horses to a walking pace in the rear of the carriages, but the ladies ate their modest meal at their leisure, and discussed many questions concerning the Glendares over it.

From the windows of Miss Riley's house a good view was to be obtained of the procession, and from attic to parlour her rooms were crammed by guests possessed of sufficient forethought to take their mid-day repast with them. As for Miss Riley—half blind, half deaf, whole childish—seated close by the window-frame, she kept up an incessant wail for Nettie. She had asked Nettie—why did she not come? it would amuse Lillie to see the show; why, if Nettie did not care for it herself, should she deprive her little girl of the pleasure? she had been a little girl once herself, and a good girl too—before she was naughty and ran away with Mr. Brady.

Poor old lady! who would not rather die in the summer's prime than live on into the dull December days, to babble idle stories to heedless listeners? Who cared about the tale of Nettie's marriage now? who cared for Nettie herself, or Mr. Brady, or Miss Riley? The house was central, and commanded a good view of the procession. Her older guests hearkened to her civilly, if secretly impatient of her doting utterances. The younger talked, and whispered and laughed, charmingly oblivious of the fact that, if they lived long enough, age must come to them also—age possibly even less attractive than that presented by Miss Riley. But there was no Nettie; at no window in Kingslough did that most lovely face keep watch for the long, and slow, and mournful funeral array.

Contrary to all precedent, Mrs. Brady grew fairer as she grew older.

Possibly had all gone well with her—had she married happily, and led the easy, contented life it were devoutly to be wished all women could lead—she might have grown plump, and so lost her beauty.

But as it was, the delicate carmine of her cheeks had not deepened, the cheeks had grown no rounder, the hair had darkened but little, the figure was lithe and slight as ever. She was the Nettie of old save for this, that across her blue eyes there lay a dreamy shadow which added to their tenderness, and that her mouth, once almost childish in the pliability of its muscles, had acquired an expression which one who knew nothing of her story might have failed to understand aright.

She had suffered cruelly, she had made a mistake, and some of the years during which she must expiate her error were gone and past—a few, only a few—but she was still so young that grief seemed to touch her with a remorseful pencil, and increased her loveliness instead of destroying the one great gift God had bestowed upon her.

Nevertheless, few now looked upon her winsome face. On the rare occasions, when she was compelled to enter Kingslough, she walked through it with veil drawn close, with hurried steps, with eyes that looked neither to right nor left, that recognized and wished to recognize no one who had known her in the old days departed.

Not so, however, Mr. Brady ; about Kingslough he swaggered frequently, and time, which works wonders, had brought him nods and "how-d'ye-do's" and "good mornings" from men too idle, or too busy, or too careless to interest themselves concerning the antecedents of an apparently prosperous man.

While Miss Riley moaned over Nettie's absence, he was solemnly amongst the other mourners reining in a mare that for blackness and uplifting of all her feet in protest of the pace he forced her to adopt, might have done credit to any undertaker in the United Kingdom.

As it was, the earl's funeral brought him a good price for "Brunette." Common decency forbade a deal during the tedious journey to Kingslough, but human nature suggested a series of remarks which led a certain Captain Labucerbe to call next morning at Maryville and offer a given sum for

"Brunette," which, after a becoming hesitation and reluctance, Mr. Brady accepted.

If, however, Nettie was nowhere to be seen, her old companion Miss Moffat sat conspicuous amongst the ladies who crowded the windows of Major Perris' house. Time had amply fulfilled Mr. Perris' predictions concerning her beauty, At four-and-twenty she was the most lovely woman in all that part of the country. The world of Kingslough had settled that she was certain to marry Robert Somerford, as it had settled years before she must marry John Riley; but a girl possessed of her beauty and her money had no lack of suitors, and if she were destined to wed the late earl's nephew she seemed also destined to refuse before doing so as many would-be husbands as usually offer themselves to the favourable consideration of an heiress.

Had it not indeed been for the fact of Mr. Somerford's constant visits at Bayview, Kingslough might have decided that Grace bade fair to become an old maid; but as matters stood she was looked upon as almost engaged, and treated by her friends accordingly.

Her denials of the statement were treated precisely then, as her denials of a similar statement had been treated formerly. Kingslough was convinced in its own mind that whenever Mr. Somerford got "an appointment" the marriage would take place; and Kingslough also felt satisfied she would have become a wife long previously but for her father's objection to her wedding a man who had no money and no position. That Mr. Moffat had never been asked either to consent or refuse was too absurd an idea to entertain.

Of course she was going to marry Robert Somerford—so said Kingslough, and whatever Kingslough said, it implicitly believed to be true.

Slowly the hours crept by. On the road conversation grew brisker; at the windows of the Kingslough houses it flagged grievously; in the streets people were getting very weary, and not a few very drunk.

The shutters of the public-houses were closed, it is true, but the doors stood hospitably open, and amongst the crowd of friends and neighbours who thronged the streets there were not wanting plenty of persons willing to treat and wishful to be treated.

Nevertheless, even with the charm whisky is capable of exercising, the masses were beginning to get very tired.

Everything about the late earl and the new earl, and my lady, and Mr. Robert and Mr. and Mrs. Dillwyn, that could be said had been said. Speculation itself could advance nothing further concerning the Glendare future, and the oldest inhabitant could remember nothing about the Glendare past which he had not already communicated.

As for the ladies—the best regulated mind could scarcely have considered the entertainment provided that day particularly exhilarating. Hostesses had committed the great mistake of inviting their guests to come for luncheon, and consequently, when luncheon was over, and no sign of the funeral still appeared, a feeling of boredom crept over even the liveliest of the company.

The occupation of mentally criticising each her neighbour's apparel was denied on this occasion. Every one appeared in black, and as of course people could not be expected to purchase a new dress for the occasion, a general effect of second or third best attire prevailed, which at once defied and disarmed comment.

No Mrs. Hartley was there now in Kingslough to excite or amuse the occupants of any drawing-room by her plain speech and sharp retorts. Long previously she had returned to a country where, to quote her own observation, "The poorest children are taught to pronounce the letters in the alphabet properly."

"How do they pronounce H ?" Grace wrote back at once to inquire.

In congenial society she rustled her silks—in a civilized land she recalled the years spent "amongst a warmhearted, barefooted, and prejudiced race," with something of the same feeling as Dr. Livingstone, say, might evince if he ever returned to converse familiarly concerning the inhabitants of Central Africa. In her descriptions of Irish ways, of Irish notions, of Irish management, of Irish eccentricity, the lady was merciless. The manners and customs of the Isle of Saints were described to attentive listeners with a *verve* and bitterness for which it seemed difficult to account, except on the ground of intense dislike to the country and the people; and in truth there had been a "difference" between her and those of the Irish over whom she exercised some authority, a difference of so grievous a description, that she sold all the land she owned to Lord Ardmorne, and, shaking the dust of Ireland off her feet, vowed a vow never to enter the country again.

Had she remained in Kingslough, it is possible the lives of Mrs. Brady and Grace might have been different. As matters stood, both her former favourites went on their separate ways without forming a close friendship with any woman, without considering it necessary to establish confidential relations with any adviser. There was no one now to talk reproachfully to Grace about the honest heart she had stabbed by her rejection of his love; no one to show Nettie how to make the best thing of an existence she had marred for herself so young.

The peace of mind of Kingslough, no longer disturbed by the rich dress and bold utterances of that strong-minded Englishwoman, who had been so fond of golden-haired Nettie and dark-haired Grace, of the girl with blue eyes and the girl with grey, had attained a state of tranquillity verging on dulness. But for the sayings and doings of the democratic party, there would literally have been no stock subject of conversation amongst the *élite* of Kingslough. As it happened, however, just at the time of Lord Glendare's death, the malcontents and those who, wishing to acquire notoriety, self-elected themselves champions of the people's rights, had been making an unusual disturbance. Meetings were held and speeches delivered; the beauties of Ireland described, and the soil, "blessed by heaven and cursed by man," invested with a number of qualities subsequent experience has scarcely evolved from it. Tom Moore was freely quoted, as well as some of the extremely beautiful poetry produced during the time of the Rebellion. History was ransacked to furnish instances of English cruelty and Irish chivalry. After listening to the orations poured forth with all the fervour, and unreason, and discursiveness for which democratic orators have always been noted, an uninformed auditor could only draw one conclusion, namely, that there had never been a great statesman, poet, patriot, soldier, sailor, or writer born out of Ireland.

With throbs of national pride the people listened and believed, as name after name was recited from what the speakers were pleased to style the "glory-roll of time." With rejoicing they gathered beside ingle nooks, and around the turf fire of some wayside public-house, to hear the schoolmaster or any other "scholard" read out leaders in which the Whig paper of the county spoke of the "oppressed tenants," of the "grinding tyranny" of the landlords, of the

right of the men who in the "sweat of their brows tilled the soil to reap the fruit of their labours."

It would have been touching—had it not been almost heart-breaking—to behold the simple faith with which these utterances were received. Now that men had "arisen to speak for them," the population felt satisfied the future would be bright as the past had been gloomy.

That they were in danger of falling between two stools never occurred to them; that old friends might withdraw helping hands, that new friends might be unable really to benefit was too common-sense a view of the matter to present itself; that orators were all unconsciously driving nails into the coffins of one generation in order to benefit generations then unborn, was a truth too self-evident to be acknowledged by anybody. They believed that in gaining fresh advantages, they should lose none of the old; that in being independent of the rich, they stood no danger of losing the help and friendly feeling of the class above them.

It was not much they really wanted, something less than justice would have satisfied every honest, sensible man in the community; but a great deal more than justice would not have contented the new brooms, who believed society only wanted to be swept by them to be made clean, who held the doctrine that the only way to remodel old ways was to destroy them, to encourage affection between all classes in the community was to exterminate class altogether, and to exemplify practically the truth of the Irish theory that "one man is as good as another—and better."

In no community could social changes such as these indicated, have passed altogether unnoticed; and in a neighbourhood like Kingslough, where the upper ten bore an absurdly small proportion to the lower thousand, much conversation was induced by the evil doings of the new prophets who had arisen to lead the people to destruction.

Even amongst ladies the topic proved one of considerable interest, and much of the talk in many houses on the day of Lord Glendare's funeral centred in the grievances, real or fancied, of the lower orders.

As for Miss Moffat, her sympathies were with the people, but she had no toleration for the demagogues who were deluding them.

An earnest, quiet, patient friend of the poor, she did not

care to listen to foolish talk, either about their wrongs or the way to right them.

With all the strength of her nature she loved the hard-working, devoted, uncomplaining men and women amongst whom she had grown from a child to a woman, but well she knew it was because of their unconsciousness of fortitude, of endurance, of humble heroism, that she had grown so fond of them, and she almost hated the orators who were trying to change the very natures of those they addressed.

At the same time she had seen too much of the bitterness of the poverty against which her humble friends waged incessant war; she understood too well the struggle occupiers of land had to get enough out of the soil to pay their rent and keep soul and body together, to endure with patience senseless remarks concerning the discontent and ingratitude of poor deluded creatures who flocked all too eagerly to hear the tale of their wrongs and their trials recounted with dangerous eloquence, with declamation and exaggeration.

Her heart was sore for the people. Had she sprung from them, had she been of their blood and their bone, her soul could not have gone out to them in their sorrow and their suffering more freely than proved the case. She "spoke up for them," and did no good either to them or herself by her advocacy.

"When you are older you will know better," said one antiquated lady, shaking her ancient head with an air of solemn wisdom.

"The whole matter," broke in a lively little matron, "puts me in mind of that story which tells how a client, who suddenly burst into tears whilst his counsel was speaking, being asked why he cried, answered 'I never knew how much I had lost until now;' and in like manner the peasantry never knew they were oppressed and injured till Mr. Hanlon, and men such as he, told them so."

"Do you mean us to infer from your anecdote that the client had lost nothing?" asked Grace with judicial calmness.

"How can I tell? you have the story as I heard it."

"Because," proceeded Miss Moffat, "if you wish to make me believe that the tenants even in this neighbourhood have no just cause of complaint——"

"For pity's sake," interrupted Mrs. Perris, "do not let us open up that question, Grace! We are none of us land-

owners. If there is anything wrong, we are utterly powerless to put it right. For my own part, I agree with my husband that nothing could place the present race of tenants in a better position. They ought all to be labourers. They have not money enough to work the land easily or profitably. If they are miserably poor it is not because their rent is too high, but because they have no capital to put into their farms excepting their own and their children's labour."

"Yes; and they would shoot anybody with money, who took a farm and offered to give them employment, or else burn his house down about his ears, or set fire to his ricks," finished a maiden lady, whose brother, having tried the experiment of going a-field for his tenants, had been compelled to abandon the attempt. "Take my word for it, Miss Moffat, when you become one of the Glendares, you will see there is another side to the land question than that espoused by Mr. Hanlon and his set."

"When I become one of the Glendares, it is extremely likely I shall adopt the opinions of the family on all subjects," said Grace a little bitterly.

"It is supposed," remarked the lively matron who had previously spoken, "that if Mr. Somerford were in a position to declare his sentiments, he would side with the people."

"The younger members of great houses are generally in opposition," said Colonel Perris' father, who, by reason of an attack of gout had been compelled to forego the pleasure of accompanying Lord Glendare's remains to the family vault; "just as men who want to rise are Radicals, and men who have risen are Tories. Am I not right, Miss Moffat?"

"Possibly," she replied. "Your experience of life has been much wider and longer than mine."

"Ah, Miss Grace!" exclaimed the old man, "how cruel it is of you to remind me how far behind I have left my youth."

"I do not think youth such a particularly happy season that one ought to regret its departure," was the answer.

"Wait till you are old before you decide that question," he retorted.

"And others, you would imply," she added.

"And others," he repeated. "Believe me, those who think there can be nothing easier than to put the world right, often find the operation more difficult in practice that in theory. Take for instance Mr. Robert Somerford——"

"Perhaps, Mr. Perris, you will defer pointing a moral by the help of Mr. Somerford till he is present to hear for himself. I beg to state I am not the keeper of his conscience." And with a heightened colour Miss Moffat walked to the window, whilst the ladies exchanged significant looks, and Mr. Perris chuckled audibly.

"If they do not come soon, it will be quite dark before they get to the abbey," said Mrs. Mynton, referring to the funeral party, and, true to her instincts, striving to make matters comfortable for Grace. "Hush! is not that the bell?"

It was the bell of St. Martin's Church tolling slowly, solemnly.

"They have got to the Black River, then," observed Mr. Perris, that being the point where the parish of Kingslough was supposed to commence.

"As they pass through the town the whole peal is to be clammed—muffled," said his daughter-in-law.

"I thought it was considered unsafe to ring all the bells," remarked Grace, not sorry, perhaps, to have an opportunity of speaking on an indifferent subject.

"The risk is to be run to-day, at all events," was the reply. "If the tower comes down, and the ringers are killed, it will be a graceful opportunity for the new earl to win golden opinions by rebuilding the first, and providing for the families of the second."

"I wonder if he will remain at Rosemont?" marvelled Mrs. Mynton.

"I should think he would reside with his mother," observed a widow, who had kept her only son tied to her apron-strings till he was long past forty.

"I should think he would do no such thing," said Mrs. Perris decidedly. "He ought to travel, and get enlarged ideas, and rid himself of the absurd notion that the earth was created solely and exclusively for the benefit of the Glendares."

"Who is Radical now?" suggested Grace.

"I am not," was the reply; "but I would have young men be young men, and learn what is passing in the world, and acquire fresh ideas. How should any one be benefited by living with Lady Glendare—a silly, affected woman?"

"Who must be in grievous trouble," interposed Miss Moffat softly.

"True, my dear, and I beg her and your pardon for speaking so ill-naturedly. She must be in trouble. The earl's death will make a great difference to her."

"She intends to go to her sister, Lady Martinell, for the present," Grace explained; "and Lord Trevor—the new earl—talks of staying at Rosemont."

"At Rosemont! what attraction can he find there?" exclaimed the company in chorus.

"Mr. Dillwyn thinks it would be advantageous to the property for him to remain on the spot for a time at least."

"Mr. Dillwyn, oh! Mr. Dillwyn, ah! Mr. Dillwyn has great influence. Mr. Dillwyn knows all the ins and outs of the Glendare estates."

These and other expressions like them were uttered in different tones by the assembled ladies. In their hearts, perhaps, they had hoped the death of the earl would prove the signal for Mr. Dillwyn's dismissal. Amongst them there were several who could not have married the agent themselves, but there were few who ever intended to forgive his marrying Mrs. Somerford.

By the window stood Grace Moffat, listening to the storm in a teapot she had brewed so unwittingly. She was sorry now she had come into Kingslough. The whole of the talk about herself and Robert Somerford, the Glendares and their tenantry, seemed to her ill chosen on such an occasion.

She had longed, with a longing the nature of which she could not have explained to herself or any one else, to see the funeral procession—the hearse, the coaches, the carriages, the long, long train of mourners. The whole thing had taken possession of her imagination; she had brooded over the earl's death; she recalled the stories of the Somerfords' former greatness; the years when, as legends ran amongst the poor, their doors stood wide to all comers; when the gentry feasted in the hall, and there was plenty and to spare in the kitchen; when no beggar left the gate unrelieved; when, let money be spent in England or abroad, or wherever it might be, with a careless prodigality, there was no stint at home; and she contrasted those years with the later and more evil times upon which the Glendares had fallen.

That was the beginning, this was the end. From Robert Somerford she had heard histories of the shifts to which his uncle was compelled to resort, the anxieties he endured, the

small gratification he was ever able to take out of his estates, his title, his wife, his children.

To Grace, who formerly thought the life of an earl must be one of unqualified happiness, these revelations proved a disillusion almost impossible to endure. To be placed so high, and yet have to stoop so low; to have the power, apparently, of achieving so much, and yet to be unable to do anything useful; to hold the happiness of so many in hand, and still to fail in bettering the condition of those most dependent upon him; to be burdened with debt, not altogether of his own contracting, but to a great extent an ever-increasing legacy handed down from ancestor to ancestor through generations to him, and yet lacking moral courage to retrench and live in honour and comfort, if not luxury,—the whole thing seemed to her so pitiful that she could neither get the life nor the death of the late earl out of her mind.

What would the new earl, invested so young with such a terrible responsibility, make of his life? On him devolved the debts, the duties, the cares, the upholding of an ancient name. How would he, still almost a boy, support the burden thrust upon him—the legacy of debt, the duty of honour, the commission to put wrong right? How would he act?

And if not he, how would Robert Somerford—supposing—only supposing?

She put the idea swiftly aside. Robert was still only a cadet of a noble house. So far as she was concerned, she had no desire ever to see him otherwise, only——

Round at that moment went the bells, taken from the old abbey, open; round again, muffled; round again open; round muffled, and still once again, then clammed, muffled.

With tongue silenced, with face a little pale, each woman hurried to the window; the procession was at hand—they were about to see the last in this world of Louis Earl of Glendare.

On came the cavalcade—first the undertaker's men, a strange sight in the little town, then the hearse conveying all that was mortal of the late earl, then the first coach, containing the new earl, the Hon. Cecil Somerford, the late earl's uncle, a shrivelled, weird old man, my lady's brother, and Mr. Robert Somerford.

That vehicle had the probable succession in this order,—first, the earl, then Mr. Cecil, then Mr. Robert. It were

idle to suppose the two latter were not calculating chances, even on the way to the grave.

It was quite possible Mr. Cecil might be a peer before he died. On the other hand, given some chances in his favour, it was equally possible Mr. Somerford might step into the coveted position.

How they loved each other, those two mourners! how they hated each other were indeed the better phrase; with the low, vulgar hatred wherewith Mr. Briggs' laundress regards her relation Mrs. Griggs' nurse when she imagines Mrs. Wiggs, aunt to both, has left to the latter a snug sum in the savings' bank and her personal effects as well.

Looking around, and seeing how money and rank are coveted, which amongst us is there that should wish to live?

Reverse the notion, and which is there that should wish to die, and leave such prizes, as most people regard them, behind?

Slowly the procession passed along, the sad, grey waves lapping in upon the shore, wailing out a requiem for the dead.

Dark and sullen looked the sea under the leaden sky—like a vast desert the waters stretched away to the horizon, where clouds and waves seemed to touch each other.

It was a sight to make one shiver, that mournful pageant—that sorrowful sea, and all the time the bells rang out open, muffled, clammed.

Next behind the coach containing the new earl followed one in which were seated other relatives of the deceased nobleman, then came my lady's brother, then Lord Ardmorne's carriage, occupied by himself and two of his sister's sons; to that succeeded a long line of carriages belonging to the gentry for twenty miles round, then more humble vehicles, covered with jaunting-cars, phaetons and dog-carts, all constituted mourners to Ballyknock Abbey, while beside the carriages and cars rode gentlemen and officers who had come from far and near to pay the last token of respect to the late earl.

As the procession moved on, the tenants closed in behind the conveyances.

Many of them had walked all the way from Rosemont; but those selected to keep the line, so soon as the carriages had passed by, fell into position as part of the funeral train.

Altogether an impressive pageant, not by reason of any

great pomp or grandeur in the arrangement, but rather by the mere force and accumulation of numbers.

Along the Parade, past Glendare Terrace, than making a slight sweep inland, it began to ascend the steep hill it was needful to climb before the abbey could be reached.

It was late in the afternoon, and the evening shadows were already to the east darkening down over the sea, when the hearse stopped at the rusty gate of the burying-ground, through which no conveyance could pass.

With many pauses, with many relays of bearers, the heavy coffin was borne into the abbey, where, in the roofless chancel, with the heavy branches of the ivy falling across crumbling walls, the clergyman read the first part of the funeral service over the remains of him who had so lately been Earl of Glendare.

Borne through the stillness came the cry of the sea-birds hurrying homeward to their rocky haunts. The tide, which had turned some hours previously, was rapidly covering the shingle, and the waves broke with a monotonous plash on the beach below Ballyknock head; whilst seaward, a little between the town, nestling under its hills, and the extreme east, over which night seemed to be settling down, a line of white foam marked the spot where sunken rocks lay concealed.

A dreary landscape to contemplate, a dreary time and place for such a ceremony.

Black yawned the vault where so many a Glendare slept dreamlessly, and when the coffin had been lowered and the handful of earth was flung upon it, the sound echoed back upon the ears of the bystanders with a hollow reverberation which had in it something awful to the imagination.

It was all over, and the multitude dispersed, tenants, friends, relatives, they had done everything they could for the dead, and the time had come to leave him till eternity. Already the great funeral was a thing of the past, the late earl a memory. From the east darkness crept up swiftly, night was coming on apace; the sheep that, frightened by such a concourse of people, had stood huddled together on the hill-side, now came timidly back and made their way over the low broken wall into the old graveyard; the men whose business it was to close the vault stood waiting with their lanterns and tools to begin their work; but still Mr. Dillwyn could not prevail on the earl to leave the coffin. Through

the whole of the time occupied in traversing the long road that stretched between Rosemont and Ballyknock he never spoke a word, he never evinced a sign of emotion. During the burial service it was noticed by several persons that he seemed as collected as though the dead had been neither kith nor kin to him; and the calmness with which he informed Mr. Dillwyn that he wished to go down into the vault alone, for a moment deceived even that astute gentleman as to his real feelings.

Five, ten minutes passed, then Mr. Dillwyn followed into the charnel-house, where, by the light of two candles that were flickering in the draught, he saw the new earl kneeling on the ground, his arms stretched across the coffin and his head laid upon them, crying like a child.

He took no notice either of entreaty or remonstrance. It was all in vain that the agent tried first to soothe and then to rouse him. He might have been deaf for any heed he paid to comfort or expostulation, and when at length he was almost dragged into the open air, he continued sobbing as though his heart were breaking.

Then the damp night wind, laden with sea mist, brought on a violent fit of coughing, which lasted till they had descended the hill and entered their carriage.

"We had better have the windows up," said Mr. Dillwyn, the moment they were in motion, anxiously suiting his actions to his words.

For he saw, and so did Robert Somerford, that the handkerchief the young man held to his mouth was stained with blood!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PEOPLE'S FRIEND.

The Mr. Hanlon casually referred to in the previous chapter had been the first to set the ball of democracy rolling through Kingslough.

I do not mean that he originated the feeling of discontent; that he invented a new form of political religion which he invited the people to join; or that he introduced strange and heretical doctrines concerning the rights and privileges of the powers that then were to the consideration of those who were

many degrees lower in the social scale. But he gave the popular sentiment shape; he spoke the ideas that had never hitherto found voice; he turned the dissatisfaction which had long and silently prevailed, into a wail of complaint, and then he set his poetry to music; he wedded the moans of the down-trodden to his own fervid eloquence, and the men who had never before got a gentleman to talk their thoughts for them, hung upon his sentences, and believed that the good time which each succeeding generation seeks but never finds —the good time, so long in coming—was at hand at last.

A gentleman they called him. Well, perhaps so. And yet, possibly, the hardiest of his admirers might have hesitated to give him a niche beside one of the "old stock." He dressed better, spoke better, was better educated, was better looking than any other male resident in Kingslough; he came of a sufficiently respectable family, and he was not destitute of money, nor mean about spending it. But there was something lacking; something which, in a different country and a larger sphere, he might either have lived down or corrected, that prevented his making any mark socially amongst his equals, or having the right hand of fellowship held out by his superiors.

And under this neglect the man writhed. The son of an army surgeon who, after seeing all sorts of places and associating with all kinds and varieties of men, was well enough content at last to settle down on his patrimonial estate of a few hundred acres of bog and call himself the "squire," Theophilus Hanlon had, from the paternal mansion, looked out upon the world with an ever-increasing conviction that the world would be exceedingly glad to welcome his appearance.

He was not singular in this idea: other young men have held the same opinion, and been disabused of it. The singular thing about Theophilus Hanlon was that no lapse of time and no sequence of events seemed able to teach him the world had not waited—was not waiting for him with breathless anxiety.

He had lived much with women—a bad beginning for one of his self-conscious, conceited temperament. He was clever, and his mother and sisters and aunt and grandmother lifted up their hands in astonishment at the extent of his knowledge.

The years spent by Mr. Hanlon, senior, out of Ireland were not, however, entirely bare of fruit. He was wise enough to see that the home atmosphere did not altogether

agree with his son's mental health, and that there was not the slightest chance of Theophilus finding his level unless he went far afield from Hanlon's-town to do it.

The result of this was, that although it sorely crippled his income to educate his son in England, he sent him to a good school in one of the midland counties; and when the lad was considered sufficiently old and well informed for the purpose, despatched him to Edinburgh, where, after duly attending lectures, and going through a very respectable course of private study, he passed his examination, and returned to Ireland and his parents "licensed to kill."

But, as at Hanlon's-town, it was an utter impossibility for him to hope for patients, as there was nothing in the whole of the neighbourhood on which to operate, except snipe, teal, and wild-duck, it became necessary for the young man to select farther afield the scene of his future triumphs.

Wherever he went he had always been a favourite with women; his curly brown hair, his hazel eyes, his clear complexion, his upright figure, his assured walk, his confident manner, his profound belief in his own abilities, had won him the admiration of that sex which is so apt to assume as correct the estimate men entertain of their own virtues, until those men chance to become their husbands; and already Theophilus considered he had nothing to do except to step across life's threshold and walk straight away to success.

So far experience had taught him very little; this Mr. Hanlon, senior, confessed to himself with a sigh. He might as well have kept his money as spent it in keeping his boy at school.

"I can't make out what you want at all," said Mrs. Hanlon, to whom he confided his anxieties. "You might search Ireland through and not find such another as Phil. Why he is as upright as a dart, and as handsome as a picture, and as dutiful as a girl, and then what is there he can't do? what is there he doesn't know?"

"He doesn't know anything about himself," replied Mr. Hanlon; "and I am not sure that book learning can quite supply that defect. However I have done all I could——"

"And that you have," finished the warm-hearted, though not overwise matron, "that you have. And sold Harkaway, and parted with your diamond buckles and gold snuff-box, that the boy might not want a start in life.

"But he won't forget it to you, he won't," continued Mrs. Hanlon, the tears starting into eyes bright and hazel like her son's, and warming in her Irish idiom as a high-couraged horse warms to his work; "when he's driving through Dublin to the Castle in his carriage and pair, and another pair to the back of that in his stables besides, he won't forget the father who gave up hunting for his sake, and sold the emerald pin out of the breast of his shirt that his son might want for nothing among the strangers. It will come home to you, Larry, your goodness and thought for that boy."

"Well, I hope so," said Mr. Hanlon, who evidently entertained a lower opinion of the soil in which he had sown for future reaping than his wife. "Anyhow, I have done all I could. My judgment may have been at fault, but according to my light I have done all I could."

Had the opinion of Mr. Theophilus Hanlon been taken, he would have confirmed the hopeful augury of his maternal parent. Judging by results, nothing could be wiser than the course his father had adopted. Was not his accent better than English? Had not one of his lady friends assured him his speech had all the refinement of the Court of St. James's, while retaining the mellow softness of the seductive Dublin brogue? He had added another charm, while retaining the old. Was not his appearance as attractive as that of the most fashionably-dressed Sackville Street lounger. Were not his mental acquirements far beyond those of other men? Had he not learned and remembered, had he not studied to good purpose? Were not his manners fit for a palace? to quote Mrs. Hanlon's own words, and to borrow again from the freely expressed statements of that admiring parent, "Even to his handwriting, there was a character and a dash about all he did."

He could shoot, he could ride, he could dance; what should stand between him and wealth, and fame, and happiness?

Out in that great world of which Mrs. Hanlon knew so little, but where she had a sure faith, heiresses were plentiful and confiding, her boy would, she opined, "Pick up something worth the lifting."

Theophilus had no idea of picking up anything in a hurry. If he were inclined to throw himself away, there was a little girl in Worcestershire he might have for the asking; a girl who had made eyes at him when he was only a schoolboy, and who was mistress of a very snug fortune. Theophilus

knew he could have her, for she wrote to him frequently with a certain tenderness of tone, and on the occasion of his last visit to her uncle's house she had gone as close to proposing for the conceited young Irishman as a girl well could; but he was still at the entrance of that wood whence he had liberty to select his sapling. He would not choose hastily, he would see what grew to right and left of the enchanted pathway and cut accordingly.

Till then behold him a bachelor, careless, unfettered, free to go wherever chance called or fate beckoned.

Fate beckoned him to Kingslough. The precise chain of circumstances it would be tedious to follow; but an old friend of Mr. Hanlon's happening to hear he wanted to find a good opening for his son, a surgeon, wrote to say Kingslough presented what he sought.

Only one medical man in the place, town improving and extending yearly; becoming a fashionable seaside resort; present doctor breaking up, slightly deaf and sight failing; only necessary to take apartments, and practice certain to follow. Beautiful scenery; good society.

So averred Mr. Hanlon's informant, who, being a man of good connexion, an officer, and connected with one or two old families in the north of Ireland, had probably found a visit to that part of the country very pleasant indeed.

Strangers often do find sojourning in a neighbourhood more delightful than the inhabitants themselves; perhaps for the same reason, that the good qualities of most people reveal themselves more fully to acquaintances than to those of their own household.

Englishmen who have visited the Isle of Saints are always eloquent concerning the hospitality shown to them. On the same subject, however, the Irish themselves are occasionally discreetly silent.

After he had been a couple of years in Kingslough, Mr. Hanlon had many opinions to express relative to this matter, none of them complimentary to the inhabitants.

Upon the other hand the inhabitants generally were not complimentary when they spoke of Mr. Hanlon.

Pecuniarily he could not complain of his success. For a young man and a stranger he had a large and not unprofitable practice. His living cost him little, his habits were not expensive. He had made friends with the beggars, he could afford to go his rounds on horseback, and to wear far

finer broadcloth than Dr. Girvan had ever donned, but the Kingslough Upper Ten closed their doors upon him.

They would neither let him physic nor associate with them. To invert the words of a celebrated wit—they returned his medicine and dispensed with his visits.

Why, who could tell?—they conceived a prejudice against the man. If he had crouched to them, perhaps in time he might have crept his way into their parlours and drawing-rooms—had he been humble, and comported himself with commendable bashfulness, they might possibly have eventually patted him on the back and bid him take heart of grace, and not be confounded and overwhelmed by their condescension.

As it was, he held his head too erect, he spoke with too unabashed a front, he treated even the highest with too great an assumption of equality to please people who held their own heads very high, and when they spoke expected to be listened to with deference, and felt themselves to be better than anybody in the land, unless indeed it might be the Duke of Leinster and a few others of the same rank.

In a word Kingslough tabooed Mr. Hanlon, and Mr. Hanlon had his revenge. In our own times we have seen the effect of a judicious bone thrown to a very dissatisfied and yelping leader of discontented masses. In those times Kingslough felt the effect of not having asked Mr. Hanlon to dinner. Had they stopped his mouth with food eaten in good company, the democrats must have waited a little longer for the arrival of an exponent of their wrongs.

As matters stood, since Mr. Hanlon could not have the gentry, he ranged himself with the people. Smarting under slights real and imaginary, he grew rabid against "those ignorant persons who called themselves the aristocracy." "Nature's gentlemen—those who delved and dug, those who followed the plough and worked hardly for that they earned honestly, were the only form of nobility he could recognize."

"He was neither Whig nor Tory; he was for the people, who were coming to their rights at last." "He loved the Irish, but he could not call mushroom lords or newly created marquises Irish. By what right did they hold their lands? Should honest men be kept serfs and slaves because a couple of centuries previously a profligate thief had bestowed stolen land upon one of the members of his

fraternity?" This and much more said Mr. Hanlon in private and in public. Whenever in the "wild parts of Ireland," as the Kingslough people called the midland and southern parts of their own country—a compliment reciprocated by calling the province in which Kingslough was situated the "black North,"—one of those accidents occurred which are not unusual even now, Mr. Hanlon pointed the moral and adorned the tale.

Not even the "largest circulation in the world" could have idealized a fact better than he.

Were a landlord shot—and shot plenty of landlords were—he drew pictures of evicted tenants, of deserted hearths, of cottages whence the roof-tree had been ruthlessly torn, of nursing mothers driven forth to feel their sucking children dying at the breast; of men wasted with fever falling by the wayside and "seeking that justice in heaven they had been denied on earth."

That was Mr. Hanlon's style of oratory, and the facts on which he founded it were sometimes too true; but then he forgot, like all special pleaders, the other side—the unpaid rent, the untilled land, the exhausted acres; the hut it was a disgrace for a man possessed of his full complement of legs, arms, and senses to call a house and a home; the half-starved cow; the greyhound-like pig; the energetic fowls that lay only because they sought their food with twenty times the industry and courage displayed by their owners. This side of the question of which the "wild parts of Ireland" presented examples in plenty, was forgotten by Mr. Hanlon when he waxed eloquent, and I question much whether when he so wrought upon the feelings of his auditors, one amongst them bestowed a second thought on the man stricken down in his prime, of the wife left a widow, of the children orphans.

These things which would in England have driven an orderly population mad, which would have caused a cry of "blood for blood" to ring from Berwick to Penzance, failed to stir the hearts of the Northern Irish.

They had their ideas about landlords; and if those ideas failed to find such unmistakable expression in the North as in other parts of the island, it was not because their feelings were less keen or their judgment less critical.

Their passions were not vindictive and treacherous, like those of the truer, more impulsive, scarcely civilized Celt,

but they were men more dangerous to arouse, harder to subdue than any other in Ireland.

Where in the annals of that unhappy country shall we find a parallel to the holding of Derry, the heroism, the self-denial, the obdurate determination to win or die?

And it was to the descendants of men such as those who kept the walls of the maiden city that this man held forth his parable; it was amongst such enduring fuel that he thrust his torch, trying to kindle the smouldering discontent into flame.

How he and men like him succeeded there can be no need to tell. Their success is now a matter of history. Never perhaps was so much, for evil as some consider, for good as others declare, accomplished in a given time in any country as in Ireland. Fifty years ago, ay, far less than fifty, the tenant farmers were of as little account in the estimation of their landlords as Gurth the Swineherd in the eyes of his master, and now Jack is as good as Sir Harry in his own eyes, and all the old landmarks are removed, and a new *régime* has commenced—inevitable perhaps, irrevocable certainly, but which, nevertheless, no thoughtful man can contemplate with pleasure, since progress should be gradual rather than instantaneous, the growth of years rather than the result of a political eruption.

Thoughtful people in the days of which I write were much exercised in their judgments as to what was right and what was wrong. Thoughtful people have now to accept the change, be it right or wrong; but in those days the beginning of the end, was only—and no one could prognosticate how the event should prove.

Now, notwithstanding the fact that women are fervent politicians, it may very well be questioned whether they take a new measure home to nurse, as was the case before they had learned, or were permitted, to express their opinions so fluently, as is the case at present.

Grace Moffat was no politician, though she belonged to a party, and yet the matters concerning which Mr. Hanlon discoursed so glibly were to her subjects of daily and hourly consideration.

No one had felt, or could feel more keenly than she, the rotten state of that fair Denmark in which her lot was cast; she had lived too much amongst the people not to have learned to love and feel for them; but she had also heard

from her father so many remarks concerning the improvidence and false views of political economy prevailing in Ireland, that whilst her sentiments inclined her to one side, her judgment disposed her to favour the other.

Thus she was in the unenviable position known as between two stools. When she listened to the opinions that obtained in Tory circles, she felt herself a Whig; when she heard the Radical outpourings, she felt herself a Tory. Society had never injured her personally, and therefore she was not disposed like Mr. Hanlon to sweep away all the distinctions of society.

In a word, when the new prophet propounded one of his favourite theories,—

> "Worth makes the man—
> The want of it the fellow;"

she felt inclined to disagree with a proposition which, carried out by Mr. Hanlon, declared Amos Scott to be a finer gentleman than Robert Somerford.

Theoretically Mr. Hanlon might be right, practically she resented his doctrines. Taking a large view of the subject, Mr. Hanlon might be one of the best and most disinterested patriots that ever lived; but taking a personal and private view, Miss Moffat felt she had rarely met a man who excited in her so sharp an antipathy. Though not free of the magic circle in Kingslough, Mr. Hanlon had met Miss Moffat—of whom in the new form of language he saw fit to invent for himself when society refused to recognize his merits, he spoke as "a good woman," and Miss Moffat's acquaintance with him was more than mere bowing or a formal How-do-you-do.

She met him on his rounds when she paid her visits to the farmers' wives; he attended the poor often without asking for fee and reward, and Miss Moffat had seen that he did not suffer for his generosity; and thus, though he had never eaten bread or salt at Bayview, he was not altogether antagonistic to Miss Moffat.

When the humbling of the aristocrats took place, he did not desire to see Grace lick the dust. If he had the management of public opinion at that juncture, Miss Moffat should be permitted an independent income, though, of course, the bulk of her money must be distributed for the public good.

Although she was of age, Grace had not yet been able to carry out her more juvenile project of spending her wealth

in benefiting her country. There are practical difficulties in the way of benefiting a country impossible to guess, till a person comes face to face with the problem. One of Miss Moffat's impediments was the spirit of the times. She was not prepared to enrol herself under the colours of Mr. Hanlon or any one like him. If ever she married Robert Somerford, she might then be able to help the people without comprising herself. Meanwhile she felt no desire to become a representative woman. It was enough for her to help the poor and needy, to comfort the sorrowful, to provide necessaries for the sick, to soothe the dying, without entering into the vexed questions which were disturbing the land.

In the depths of her heart she loved the land and its inhabitants, but she distrusted those who were about to put all wrongs right by setting every one by the ears.

Since the earl's death matters on the Glendare estates had not been progressing favourably. The new earl was abroad, and the state of his health prevented any satisfactory settlement of disputed claims.

The demagogues had it all their own way. No one could contradict their statements. Having always maintained that he personally knew nothing of any private transactions which might or might not have taken place between the late earl and some of his tenants, Mr. Dillywn could not now take up arms on behalf of his late employer, and tell Mr. Hanlon and the remainder of that clique they were propagating falsehoods by the score.

All the sins, actual and imputed, of the Glendares since their first advent in Ireland, were resuscitated for the purpose of rounding sentences more eloquently, of enabling Mr. Hanlon and his friends to deliver themselves of more passionate bursts of oratory.

The better classes were becoming anxious. Let the dead man and his dead ancestors have been what they would, it was felt that decency ought to forbid such attacks on those whose voices were silenced for ever.

Lord Ardmorne had won golden opinions from gentlemen of all creeds and shades of politics, by protesting at a public meeting against the intemperance of Mr. Hanlon's observations—the utter irrelevance of his remarks.

"No one," said his lordship, "can accuse me of being a partisan of that family which the last speaker misses no opportunity of vilifying. In theory and practice I have been

opposed to the Earls of Glendare all my life. Their ways were not my ways; their thoughts, and ideas, and opinions differed from mine; but having admitted so much, I go on to declare that nothing shall induce me to continue to preside over a meeting where such license of language prevails—where the dead are dragged out of their graves to be gibed at and reviled—where the sorrow and the suffering of the living fail to restrain the buffoonery of a too facile tongue—where misfortune is spoken of with a taunt, and griefs are considered fit matters for jest! If such remarks are persisted in, I shall at once vacate the chair."

After that public rebuke, it might have been imagined Mr. Hanlon would transfer his attack from the Glendares to the Marquis. On the contrary, however, he was wise enough to swallow the compulsory pill with a good grace.

He apologized in a manner not destitute of tact for his indiscretion, and was happy enough to be able at the same time to wing a side-shaft at his censor, by saying in a tone of contrite humility, "He was aware he had been guilty of bad taste of speaking ill of one nobleman in the presence of another,"—a remark which, as it cut two ways, was received with applause—genuine and derisive. "If it were a necessity for some to be rolling in wealth, while others had not a crust to eat, he could wish all rich men were such as their noble chairman, or better—supposing that possible."

Altogether Mr. Hanlon held his own whilst seeming to yield, but he respected Lord Ardmorne for his straightforwardness and plain speaking.

"Unlike the Somerfords, who always left their dirty work to be done by somebody else," he said, when subsequently discussing the scene with one who held opinions similar to his own; "why, Robert Somerford was standing by all the time, and never opened his lips."

Which was indeed quite true, and had already caused much unfavourable comment, but then, as Mr. Robert remarked,—

"I have never agreed with the policy of our family, and much of their practice seems to be utterly indefensible."

"Still," urged Grace Moffat, "you surely might have found some word to speak."

"Ardmorne said all and more in my opinion than was necessary," Mr. Somerford replied. "Hanlon's a fool! why should I gratify him by replying to his folly?"

Which was plausible enough and sensible enough too for that matter, but Grace heard the sentence with a pain at her heart which had been coming and going for a long time past, but which came more frequently and was less swift about taking it departure as week followed week, and month succeeded to month.

She was beginning to doubt Mr. Somerford; to think that, making every allowance for his uncertain prospects, his dependent position, his dread of seeming a mere fortune-hunter (a character of which he had often expressed his abhorrence), he had not acted quite fairly by her.

Other men gave her at least the chance of saying no. Not so Mr. Somerford. Her prejudices against marrying and giving in marriage might be the same at twenty-four as at seventeen, but it was absurd to think of a man honestly playing at the game of fast and loose for all these years during which he had been her constant and devoted admirer.

Precisely as she had treated John Riley, so Robert Somerford was treating her, and Grace was beginning to think very seriously over his position and hers. She had done so often since the day of the earl's funeral. She was trying to see what she ought to do, how she ought to act. Instinctively she felt affairs could not remain as they were.

Two lives now only intervened between Mr. Somerford and the earldom ; two lives held by feeble threads, the strands of which might any day give way. The fact was well known in Kingslough ; it was discussed over every tea-table, and friends with the same frankness which had distinguished their utterances in days gone by were now asking Miss Moffat when she meant to become My Lady.

And yet Mr. Somerford had never once alluded to the possibility either of his attaining to the peerage or of her assuming a title. Delicacy might of course have restrained him in the one case as in the other, but there are times in life when delicacy may be a little overstrained, and Grace had arrived at the conclusion that if Mr. Somerford ever meant to take her into his confidence, it was high time he commenced.

Would she marry him if he asked her? Miss Moffat was quite old enough, and quite sufficient woman of the world to put this question to herself, and answer it, but, even mentally, she turned aside from a direct reply.

'I am never likely to be tried," she said, fencing with

the idea. "Why, in any case, should I marry? Have the married people of my acquaintance been so happy that I should make haste to run my head into the noose? And yet if I do not marry, what will my life prove? I shall be a comfort to my father for the rest of his days; I can help the poor a little; I shall either die young, or else remain till I am old, and be courted and flattered for my money, and not be able to make up my mind to whom to leave it. I wish I could fall in love; I wish I could like some one, as I think I liked Robert Somerford when I was a girl. Oh dear, what a beautiful world this is! Why are we not happier and more contented in it?"

And assuredly it was a lovely scene that on which Miss Moffat's eyes rested, as she paused on her way to the Castle Farm to take in the beauty of land and sea stretching below her. Gone were the November mists; the snows and frosts of winter; past were the vernal equinoxes; against a clear blue sky the ruins of the old abbey stood out in sharp distinctness; with scarce a ripple the sea swept gently in upon the shore; a burst of April sunshine illuminated the distant hills; the fields were dappled with white lambs and bleating sheep; from the chimneys of white-washed cottages, embosomed in trees arrayed in the tender foliage of the early spring, wreaths of smoke were ascending almost straight upwards; by the wayside bubbled a clear, swift streamlet; the air was filled with that indescribable scent which departs ere the hawthorn blossoms open, and is as surely the smell of quick, healthy vegetable life, as the decaying leaves of autumn are the smell of Nature's death.

Well might Grace Moffat pause, and look at the landscape, though she had gazed upon it hundreds of times previously: for is not a lovely view like a fair countenance? does not the beauty grow and grow as each feature becomes more familiar? did not those who knew Grace best find some fresh charm each time they beheld her face?

"A delightful morning, and a divine prospect," remarked some one close behind her; and, turning, she saw Mr. Hanlon, who had come across the fields from Kingslough, and now, leaping the narrow rivulet, raised his hat, and then held out his hand.

"Have you heard the news, Miss Moffat? No; I see you have not. Lady Jane Somerford is dead."

"And Amos Scott's old lease is out," added Grace, uttering the first idea suggested by the intelligence.

"And Amos Scott's old lease is out," he agreed.

"What will he do now?" she asked.

"If he be well advised, one of three things. He will rent another farm under Ardmorne as yearly tenant, and take his chance of being turned out at the next election unless he chooses to change his politics; he will sell every stick he has and go to America, or he will blow his brains out. As, however, he is certain not to take advice, no matter how good, he will probably go to law or try to defy law and justice so called, in which case we may predict the final result with tolerable accuracy."

"Will not Mr. Brady come to terms? I would gladly help Scott if any arrangement could be come to. You are a friend of Mr. Brady, and——"

"Pardon me," interposed Mr. Hanlon, "I know the master of Maryville. I attended his children when they had scarlatina, and I tried my best to save the little girl who would die in spite of me; but I cannot claim the honour of calling myself Mr. Brady's friend. Friendship implies some congeniality of temperament or disposition, and I fear my nature will never permit of my becoming a sufficiently finished scoundrel to suit the taste of Scott's opponent."

"Then how does it fare with Nettie—with his wife I mean?" Grace asked eagerly.

"You ask me to tell you something, Miss Moffat, which I do not know myself, which I do not want to know, of which I should not speak if I did know. To quote Dr. Girvan, a medical man should be blind and deaf while in a patient's house, and dumb when he comes out of it. Poor old man! he is fast compassing the two former states without any effort of will; but, indeed, he is right in principle, more particularly in such a gossiping little town as Kingslough. This much I may say, however, without any breach of confidence; Mrs. Brady is an admirable wife—as admirable a wife as she is a devoted mother; and whether she is happy or whether she is the reverse, no one will ever hear from her."

For a moment Grace did not reply; her thoughts were in the far away past, with Nettie in the days when they two were never apart, when, if their love was not as pure and absorbing as that of Hermione and Rosalind, it seemed to be

so. Very grievous had that severed friendship proved to Grace; and as she stood silent tears from some hidden fountain of tenderness welled up and filled her eyes almost to overflowing.

"You were very fond of Mrs. Brady," Mr. Hanlon suggested; he was not possessed of sufficient sensitiveness, or of that which stands in as good stead sometimes, sufficient *savoir-faire* to appear nonobservant of her emotion, but Grace Moffat was not one who cared to wear her heart on her sleeve, and therefore answered quietly,—

"I am so fond of her still, that the opinion you express of her husband grieves me more than I can say. And how will it fare with Scott?" she went on rapidly. "Surely Mr. Brady, let him be what he may in other respects, would not refuse to listen to reason; but, if paid for it, would be willing to humour the fancy of a man no longer young, who hoped to die, as he has lived, on the Castle Farm. He can have no associations with the place. It never belonged to him nor to one of his family. Money, or another farm, would surely be as valuable in his eyes as our poor Naboth's vineyard, and amongst my friends I am certain——"

She paused suddenly. For a moment she had forgotten herself, forgotten her antagonism against, her distrust of the man she was addressing, but the look of undisguised admiration with which he listened to her hurried sentences brought her to a stand.

"I must apologize for my vehemence, Mr. Hanlon," she resumed, blushing as she felt with angry consciousness while she spoke. "Of course you cannot carry my proposal to Mr. Brady. I will speak to my father. I will——"

"I should think Mr. Somerford would be the best agent you could employ," interrupted Mr. Hanlon.

"I should think it most unlikely he would wish to meddle in the affairs of his most unhappy family," she retorted.

"No one would stand a better chance of success in persuading Mr. Brady to a distasteful course than the future Earl of Glendare."

"He may never be Earl of Glendare." She spoke sharply, almost rudely.

"What is to prevent him?"

"The present Earl may live,—Mr. Somerford may die."

He looked at her in amazement. In common with all Kingslough he had considered the marriage as settled, the

engagement certain, and yet she spoke coolly of the possibility of the man dying. Was this feminine finessing, or an unconscious evidence of indifference?

More interesting than the study of man's body was the study of man's mind to this self-constituted champion of the people's rights.

He would study Miss Moffat—the greater included the less; and, although she was but a woman, still he might learn something during the course of his investigations that could be turned to account in his dealings with men.

"You were on your way to the Castle Farm, I conclude, Miss Moffat?" he said. "Will you allow me to walk there with you?"

"I was going to see Mrs. Scott," said Grace, "but I will turn back now—I—should not like to be present when they hear the news;" and without any more formal leave-taking she began to retrace her steps.

For a moment Mr. Hanlon stood still, and watched her retreating figure.

"It is delightful to consider," he remarked to himself, "how in any emergency of this kind, in a word, when an easy way of backing out of a difficulty has to be found females at once take refuge in the delicacy of their sex. She did not want to walk to the Castle Farm with me, and so she makes a dislike to the sight of pain her excuse. She is a good woman, but the best of Eve's daughters are 'kittle cattle' to have any say to."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MUTTERING OF THE STORM.

MEDITATING that feminine problem which has puzzled the heads of so many men, wise and foolish, Mr. Hanlon walked slowly on.

It is a curious fact that the moment any one begins to speculate on the motives influencing the actions of his fellows, he at once flings aside as untenable the possibility that those alleged can be true.

A good story has been told concerning a gentleman who offered a friend five guesses as to how a mutual acquaintance

spelt "cat." The friend tried every erroneous combination he could think of, and, each guess proving a failure, finally inquired with impatience, "How the devil does the fellow spell it, then?"

"C A T," was the reply.

In the same manner people are apt to go far a-field in order to discover causes that really lie immediately under their noses. Miss Moffat did not like Mr. Hanlon, it is true, but no thought of evading his companionship entered her mind.

She had stated the literal truth when she said she should not care to be present when Amos Scott received the tidings of Lady Jane Somerford's death; but of course Mr. Hanlon did not believe this, and so walked slowly on, full of cynical ideas anent women in general, and ladies in particular, with a very sufficient amount of bitterness towards the rich and those "who called themselves the gentry" added to the mental draught he was swallowing at the wish of no one in particular, unless indeed it might be himself.

After a little time he heard some sound cleaving the clear, crisp air; and, looking round to ascertain whence it proceeded, he saw Miss Moffat following in his path with rapid steps.

"You were so lost in thought I could not make you hear,' she said, looking so honestly at him with her fine frank eyes, that, remembering what his thoughts had been, he felt for the moment almost ashamed of them. "I called to you a dozen times, at least. It is a woman's privilege to change her mind, is it not, Mr. Hanlon?" she added, "and I have changed mine. I was a coward for a moment; but I mean to be brave now, and go to the Castle Farm with you, if you are not of the Quaker persuasion, and will allow me to say yes, after having once said no."

Concerning this speech Mr. Hanlon felt no inclination to attribute underhand motives; and yet the fact was that Grace having, after the manner of her sex, hurried to conclusions very rapidly, had decided she ought to be present when the people's friend bore the news of his misfortune to Amos Scott.

"I can do something—some trifle towards moderating this man's bitterness and Scott's sorrow. Why should I spare myself? Of what use shall I ever be in the world if I fear to see grief?" and so she assumed her pleasantest

manner; she talked naturally and genially, all to try to induce her companion to "moderate the rancour of his tongue," and to bring herself into a frame of mind likely to influence Mr. Scott and his wife, and to enable her to advise both of them for their good.

As they walked, Mr. Hanlon propounded the following question to his own soul:—

"Shall I make myself agreeable to this heiress and ask her to marry me? Would not her money assist the cause I have made my own? Could not I mould her ideas to mine? and is there any social position to which, with her as my wife, I might not aspire?"

To a man of his intense self-appreciation the very idea of such an undertaking was agreeable, but there were many reasons why he never carried it out.

In the first place, Miss Moffat, with all her gracious kindness, was not an accessible person; in the next, he could find no pretext for thrusting his company upon her; further, he was doubtful as to the reception which his suit might meet; and fourth and most potent of all reasons, he felt that the sentiments he entertained towards the lady were those rather of awe than affection. She had taken his measure—unconsciously perhaps, but certainly—and unconsciously he knew this was so.

Upon the whole, Mr. Hanlon decided against the speculation. It is not always pleasant for a man to make love to a woman possessed of sufficient brains to gauge the depth of his character.

There came a day when both fully understood the other; when she comprehended his weakness, he her strength. But that day had not yet dawned when, under the bright spring of sunshine, they walked together to the Castle Farm.

The external aspect of the place was not much changed since Mr. Moffat had driven up the divisional road seven years previously, but time had not dealt leniently with its inhabitants.

Mrs. Scott, standing in the doorway to give her visitors "kindly welcome," looked aged and haggard; the elder boys and girls had the appearance of middle-aged men and women with cares upon their heads, while the younger children walked about with staid gait and set faces.

There had been something over the place for years, and that something was now about to take definite form at last.

"It's myself is glad to see you, Miss Grace," said Mrs. Scott, "and ye too, doctor," she added, turning, with that never-failing courtesy characteristic of her country, towards Mr. Hanlon, "this beautiful morning, God bless it! Sure a day like this puts heart into one. It's grand weather for the crops. Amos? he's out in the long field, but I will send for him. Miss Grace, there is a clutch of chickens off to-day, and one of ducks yesterday. Would you like to see them? It was only last night I was saying Miss Grace was fond of the first brood. But you look white and tired," she added suddenly; "Doctor, is not our young lady well?"

"I am well enough in body," answered Grace gently, "but sick in mind, sick and sad, dear Mrs. Scott," and she put out her hand, and pressed that of the farmer's wife as she spoke.

"What is it, Miss Grace?" asked the woman trembling; "is it the masther? sure your father was well and hearty yesterday, and——"

"It is your trouble," Miss Moffat answered; "and your trouble is mine. Lady Jane is dead! and I am afraid for Amos——"

"Oh, God help us! God help us!" cried the woman, as she threw herself into a chair, and covered her head with her apron.

"I will go and meet Amos," said Miss Moffat in a low tone to her companion, and, rising, she left the house.

Well she knew her way to the long field, and not an inch of the Castle Farm but was familiar to her; it had been almost as much her home at one period as Bayview, and her heart sickened as she looked over the familiar landscape, and thought of those who could soon look at it no more.

Afar she beheld Amos Scott striding towards her, a spade over his shoulder, his left hand swinging free, his gait that of a man whose mind is in disorder.

As he drew nearer she saw his face was flushed and his eyes bright.

The news had already reached him. It was not left for her to tell.

"Ye've heard, Miss Grace, ye've heard; and now they'll be for trying to turn me out; that'll be the next game, won't it, miss?" he asked, stopping suddenly, and shooting the words at her singly, and with a might of suppressed fear and passion in his tone.

"I hope not," she said; "I do hope and trust, Amos, you will leave this matter to your friends, and let them settle it for you."

"My friends," he repeated, "who are they? Th' Airl, whose father robbed me of my money; Brady up yonder, who wants to rob me of my land; Dillwyn, who stands by and says, 'Hold hard, Scott; have at him, Brady;' Mr. Robert, who puts his hands in his pockets and declares he has been as badly treated as myself?"

"And Grace Moffat, is she not your friend?"

"God bless you, Miss Grace; you are the friend of every man, woman, and child who needs help, but you cannot help me, I must help myself."

He was softening—at least she thought so.

"Amos, I will go to Mr. Brady."

"Miss Moffat, I tell you it's no use; he has sworn to have this place; but he sha'n't have it—no. Not as long as I am aboveboard, no man, gentle nor simple, shall own the Castle Farm."

"But you do not own it," she ventured; "you only rent it."

"And where's the odds, miss? As long as I paid my rent and my renewals, was it not mine as much as th' Airl's? Did not I always vote for the Glendares' man, let him be who he liked? Hadn't I always my rent ready, no matter how me and the mistress and the children fared? Didn't I do justice by the land? Look there, Miss; would you see cleaner ground or straighter furrows in the whole of Ireland? I never grudged the dung, even when I had to draw it from Glenwellan. Though I say it as shouldn't there is not a bit of ground better done by in the country. Me and my sons, haven't we worked early and late? and now—but see there, miss, as sure as I stick that spade in the ground, Brady shall never have this land. I have took my Bible oath of that, and I never was one to go back from my word, let alone my oath."

Grace shuddered, she could not help doing so. She knew—none better—what all this meant, what all this would lead to. She, born and bred amongst them, understood what a passion for the possession of land overmasters the Irish; how it hounds them on to the commission of deeds at which calmer nations stand appalled; how, nearer and dearer than wife, child, honour, life even, an acre of daisy-covered turf may become

Involuntarily she looked towards the house. It needed no special gift of prophecy, no extraordinary amount of imagination, to prefigure the appearance it would present in days to come; roofless, doorless, windowless, abandoned by man and animal, a place near which no child played by day, a spot no man dare pass at night—the vision appalled her.

"Come with me, Amos," she cried; "come with me to your wife, and let us and the children talk it over together."

They walked side by side in the spring sunshine, they passed into the house where Mrs. Scott still sat with her apron thrown over her head, and Mr. Hanlon, standing with his back to the great fire, was discoursing to an utterly inattentive audience concerning abstract principles of government, and the utterly erroneous policy—suicidal he called it—pursued by England to Ireland.

"Well, mother, and so you've heard that the tug of war has come!" began Amos excitedly, without any formal greeting of his visitor; "but ye needn't be feared, ye needn't pack up to-day. I'll have my rights. No earl, dead or living, shall keep my money and take my farm—money hard earned, honestly come by, more nor ever a Glendare could say. And Brady too—well, he's not master here yet, and he never will be."

"It is of no use kicking against the pricks, Scott, my friend," said Mr. Hanlon; "the dead earl and the living rogue will be too many for you in the long-run. You'd best take another farm, or, better still, sell your goods, while you have any to sell, and go away to a free country, where you and your children can have liberty to work for yourself instead of for a landlord; where you can live like men instead of worse than dogs; where you will be able to call your souls your own, and be rid of the yoke under which the toilers in this wretched country groan from the cradle to the grave."

"I thank you for yer advice, Doctor; I'm sure it's well meant and kindly given; but I am not going to America, and I have no intention of leaving the Castle Farm—till I am carried out of it feet foremost," said Scott, not without a certain dignity.

"But supposing no arrangement can be made with Mr. Brady, Amos?" Grace began.

"No arrangement can be made, Miss Moffat," interrupted Mr. Hanlon. "He is a very Shylock, he will have his pound

of flesh though the fairest Portia in Ireland seek to prevent him."

"I don't know rightly what you are talking about," said the poor dazed farmer; "but if it means that Brady's going to take my home from me—that when it comes to the bit, Mr. Dillwyn and the young airl will stand by and see me and mine driven out to die by the roadside—just let him and them try it, that's all. I'm a man of few words, but you can all of you remember what I say, let them try it."

"But, Amos," pleaded Grace, "is not one farm as good as another?"

"Miss Grace, I wonder to hear you!" he answered reproachfully. "Would another wife be as good to me as her yonder? would other children be as good to me as those I have dandled on my knee, and sat up with when they were sick, and 'threatened' when they were impudent to me and the mother, and given the 'tawse' to when they wouldn't do what they were bid? Oh! ye don't know—Lord forbid ye ever should—what a home means to a man of my years, that the great of the land are conspiring to leave homeless."

"Poor Amos!" murmured Grace, with a tone too deep for words welling up in her tone. "I think—I hope I do understand what you feel; still place ought not to be so dear as people. If I had to leave Bayview to-morrow, I believe—I feel certain I could in time learn to love another place almost as much."

"Ay, but then you are a woman, and that makes all the differ," commented Mr. Scott, with that sublime contempt for the sex which, spite of their gallantry, is a fundamental characteristic of his class in Ireland.

"That is quite true," she answered, with a faint smile. "I am only a woman; if I were a man, I would try to do more to help you. As it is, I do not want to see you break your own and your wife's heart for no good purpose. Come, Amos, be persuaded; let me look you out a farm. It shall not cost you a penny to go from the one place to the other."

"And let the young airl keep the money his father robbed me of; and let Brady laugh and say, 'I got the best of him, as I have of everybody else?' No, faith, if he laughs when he has done with me, it'll be on the wrong side of his mouth I'm thinking."

"Why not go away, then, where it cannot matter whether he laughs or cries? Land is cheap enough in America; and

you may be your own tenant, and landlord too for that matter. You might found a family there, and be a great proprietoı before you die."

"You mean well, Miss Grace, and I am beholden to you; but you don't understand. I'd rather have my own bit of ground here, that I know every rood of, than own the whole of Canada. What would I do among strangers and foreigners? It is not much I want—only my rights, and I'll have them," he went on, lashing himself up into sudden fury. "Come, mistress, what are ye sitting for there, and the work all standing? and what am I doing here, talking foolishness, while the men and the horses are idle in the field? Good morning, Miss Grace, and thank you kindly, and you too, Doctor, and if ye see Brady, and me and my farm come up, ye can tell him Amos Scott is not going to be put upon or turned out of the land he paid his golden guineas for to him that's dead and gone."

Having delivered his mind of which speech, the farmer hurried out of the house, followed by some of the younger children.

When he was gone, Mrs. Scott put down her apron, and drew her hand wearily over her eyes, that ached because no tears would come.

"Ye'll excuse him," she said, speaking to both her visitors, but addressing her remarks more especially to Grace; "he is not himself. He is just out of his mind with trouble. He has been a changed man since th' Airl died, and the young lord went away without putting the wrong right. Everything is going to the bad with us. What the end of it will be, I don't know, I'm sure I don't!"

"I wish Amos would listen to reason," said Grace, with a sigh.

"What is the use of his fighting when he has got money, and rank, and law, and power all against him?" observed Mr. Hanlon.

"Ah! Miss, as he says, you don't understand; what seems reason to you, sounds like folly to him; and as for every body and thing being against him, Doctor, each word you say concerning that makes him madder. A lion in a cage could not be worse nor him when anybody speaks to him about having to leave the old place and see Brady get it."

"But it is not the first time by many the same thing has

been done," urged Mr. Hanlon. "Renewal fees have been taken time after time on this estate, and the people who paid fought the matter out, and ruined themselves just as Scott will do."

"Somebody must win, sir," she answered, in unconscious vindication of her husband's tactics.

"I think I had better go now," suggested Miss Moffat. "It seems to me we are working more harm than good. After a few days, perhaps, Amos will come to Bayview, and let me know what he intends doing."

"I have to call at Maryville," said Mr. Hanlon, looking at Grace as though he imagined she might regret his inability to accompany her home.

"Any one ill there?" inquired Miss Moffat.

"The youngest boy is ailing a little."

"What terrible bad health Mrs. Brady's children have, to be sure!" exclaimed Mrs. Scott.

"Yes," answered Mr. Hanlon with a laugh: "Doctor Girvan says the young ones about Kingslough were strong enough when he had more to do with them. Inference obvious."

"Is Maryville a healthy place?" asked Miss Moffat, looking straight into Mr. Hanlon's face.

"Pretty well for some people, not for women and children, I should say."

His meaning was obvious, at least so Grace decided; "I must know something about Nettie," she thought.

"I will tell Mrs. Brady I have had the pleasure of meeting you," said Mr. Hanlon, as if guessing what was passing through her mind.

"Yes, please do," cried Grace eagerly; "and tell her how sorry I am to hear of her little boy's illness."

When next Miss Moffat met Mr. Hanlon, she asked,—

"Did you give my message to Mrs. Brady?"

"I did," he answered, with a curious smile.

"And what did she say?"

"Nothing," he replied, adding, as Miss Moffat turned red and tried to help looking annoyed, "that is about the extent of Mrs. Brady's conversation with any one. She listens when she is obliged to listen, and answers when she cannot well avoid doing so."

"Poor Nettie!" said Grace involuntarily, and she fancied she heard her companion mutter,—

"Poor indeed!"

Before Miss Moffat reached the end of the divisional road on her way homeward from Amos Scott's, she heard hasty footsteps following, and, looking back, saw the farmer's eldest son striding after her.

"Could I speak a word to you, Miss Grace?" he asked.

"As many as you like," she answered, and at once took her seat on a large stone lying close at hand, to show him she was in no haste, but could listen to all he had to say.

During the interview at his own home the young man had sat on a settle near the fire, his body bent forward, his head drooping, his hands clasped. He never opened his lips, he never lifted his eyes save once, and that was to look at Mr. Hanlon.

Now, however, the spell seemed broken, and he began eagerly,—

"Miss Grace, will you help me to go to America?"

"You, David—without your father?"

"Yes, Miss, he'll never go—leastways, I don't believe he will; and my heart is just broke, to see things going on as they are at home. What for should I not go? If I stay here, I'll have to hire myself as a labourer—maybe to Brady. Father 'ill fight him till we haven't a bed left to lie on. Since the earl died he has been like a man possessed. He carries on about the Glendares and Brady till I'm fairly sick and tired of hearing their names. I don't say but he has been badly treated. It was a stocking full of money he gave the earl; but, as Mr. Dillwyn says, if he was so foolish as to let his hard earnings slip through his fingers on the strength of a bit of a promise, he must take the consequences."

"You must not speak so disrespectfully of your father," said Grace severely; "it is not right."

"I did not intend any disrespect, Miss," he answered. "I'd do as much—I have worked as hard for him as a son could; but I'm not a child, and I can't shut my eyes to what must come of all this. He won't leave, and Brady will take the law of him, and we'll all be brought to beggary. He was headstrong enough before Mr. Hanlon came to Kingslough—bad luck to the day he left his own part of the country—but to hear him discoursing now, anybody might think he was distraught. What is the use of talking about wrongs unless they can be put right? Maybe, Miss, you

consider I am speaking wild-like, but I sometimes feel as if I was going crazy myself. Once we could eat our stir-about* and potatoes in peace, but now I often have to leave my breakfast and dinner for fear I should be tempted to say something that might put a division between us."

"Oh, David," she cried, "do stop, please, you hurt me! When I think—when I think of the happiness and contentment I have seen in your home, I feel as if I could not realize the present misery—as if I would do anything, give anything to put matters straight."

"And when I think, Miss," he rejoined, "I feel as if I could go up to Maryville, and shoot Brady on his own doorstep,—and I would too if it could do us any good."

"Do not talk in that wicked, reckless way," said Grace; "it was not Mr. Brady's fault that the late earl took your father's money."

"It was his fault, taking the land at any rate," returned the young man doggedly. "What did he want with it? Wasn't there farms to be had in plenty without ours? Was it fair dealing to make a bid for it over my father's head, turning an honest family out of house and home? I never hear our minister read that chapter about the man who had a vineyard he wouldn't sell, or about that other who had only one yow†-lamb, but it puts me in mind of our farm and Brady. We had but one vineyard, and I misdoubt me much if it doesn't cost my father his life. We had only one yow-lamb, and he wants that from us."

His voice quivered as he spoke; the passion and pathos of his country lent eloquence to his words, homely though they were; and tears, which she could not restrain, coursed slowly down Miss Moffat's cheeks at the picture of a shattered home presented to her.

Amos could never make another; she clearly understood that if by no effort the Castle Farm could be preserved, his future presented no prospect but that of utter shipwreck. She could see the misery, the poverty, the certain ruin, the possible crime, but she could perceive no way of averting the calamity.

Her will, her money, her influence, were powerless here. A wrong had been committed which only one man living could put right, a wrong which, simple as it seemed, made

* Oatmeal porridge. † Ewe.

her for the moment marvel how the earl could rest in his grave, considering the wretchedness his act had wrought. Never before had she touched that hard spot in the Irish nature which has puzzled the most thoughtful of psychologists, and baffles the wisdom of the wisest statesmen, which not time, or experience, or kindness, or remonstrance can soften, and which seems as indifferent to severe treatment as it is insensible to gentle handling.

Had any one told her a year previously that Amos Scott would turn a deaf ear to her entreaties, her advice, her offers of assistance, she must have laughed outright; and yet, behold, it was not more than an hour since she walked up to the farm with Mr. Hanlon, and already she felt herself beaten.

As she could not help Amos to what he wanted, he would not have her help at all. She was powerless to give him the Castle Farm, and consequently he turned his back both on her assistance and her advice.

She had thought, in her ignorance, money and the will to give it could effect almost anything; and yet here was a case where it could effect nothing, literally nothing, unless Mr. Brady could be bought off.

She would try if that were possible. It was a forlorn hope, but it was a hope nevertheless. She would see Mr. Dillwyn and Mr. Somerford, and, if need be, Mr. Brady himself; and she was planning the form of words she should use, when her short reverie was broken by David,—

"So, Miss, when I heard you speaking so kind and sensible, I made up my mind I would ask you to lend me enough to go away. I can be of no sort of use here. If I stay, I may do an injury to myself or somebody else. I have long had it in my mind—months,—ever since the earl lay a-dying."

"But I thought you were going to be married?" suggested Miss Moffat.

"I am 'speaking' to Maggie Lennen; but I'll never marry, her, Miss, if I can't better myself. She'll wait for me, and when I am able to send for her, she'll come out; and then, if things go as I am feared they will, I can spare a pound now and then to my mother."

"And you would leave her to bear all this trouble alone?"

"She won't be alone; she has the rest of them. I wish we were every one of us sailing to-morrow; but as that can't

be, I'll go. I have made up my mind, Miss Grace, whether you lend me the money or not."

"I will not say 'yes,' neither will I say 'no' to-day. I will think over what you have told me, and see whether nothing can be done for your father. I am more grieved for his trouble than words can tell."

"Ah! Miss Grace; it's yourself had always a kind heart. If the old man didn't seem to set a right value on your goodness to-day, it was only because he is not just himself. He's that throng* with sorrow, he can't fairly understand; but the time will come when he'll mind it all. I don't say much, and mother she says nothing; but we feel. If our heart's blood could serve you, there is not one of us but would give it. There is nothing father would not do for you, letting alone leaving the farm."

"I think that is always the way, David," she said, with a mournful smile. "The 'except' is generally the one request we make. Suppose, now, I were to ask you, as a personal favour to myself, to remain with your parents; you would say, 'I will do anything for you, Miss Grace, but that.'"

"I would not," he answered vehemently. "If you bid me stay, I'll stay."

"I will neither bid you stay nor go," she replied, "till I have talked the matter over with people older and wiser than I am."

And so saying, she rose and wended her steps slowly homewards.

"You may find people older, and maybe wiser than yourself, Miss Grace," soliloquized the young man, as he watched her retreating figure, "but ye'll never find anybody better, search the wide world through."

CHAPTER XVIII.

FEET OF CLAY.

It is not the fashion generally to admit the fact, and yet a great deal of disappointment might be spared the rising generation were parents, guardians, and others to assure them no money yields such poor interest as that invested in philanthropic pursuits.

* Busy.

There may be reasons for this besides the innate wickedness of mankind, but one seems sufficient for the present purpose.

Taking philanthropy as a rule, we find it desires not merely to help its fellow, but to help him in its own way; and as there is probably nothing more difficult to do than this, when the good intended and the good effected—when the gratitude due and the gratitude received come to be balanced—the well-meaning benefactor generally finds himself considerably poorer, and no one else very much the better than if he had been content to leave well alone.

Truth is, kindly disposed persons are apt to imagine that money has the power of conferring upon them the position of a sort of minor Providence; and then, when the events they have influenced, and the changes they have wrought, turn out to have worked together for anything rather than good, they are inclined to become misanthropical.

Few men who benefit their fellows have the slightest idea of leaving them free-will; and when free-will rises and asserts itself, philanthropy is very naturally disgusted at such a display of ingratitude.

Perhaps when those who give and those who help, give and help merely because it is right to do both, and not because they expect thanks or return, doing good may prove a more useful and pleasant pursuit than is generally the case at present.

No idea of exorbitant interest in the shape of either thanks or gratitude had influenced Grace Moffat in any of the efforts she made to ameliorate the condition of the men and women by whom she was surrounded; nevertheless, it was scarcely in human nature to avoid feeling a sort of sick disappointment when she came calmly to review the incidents of her visit to the Castle Farm.

With all her heart she desired to set matters straight for Amos Scott; but the longer she thought, the more difficult the task appeared.

She had little hope that Mr. Brady would relinquish his claim. She could not see in what way either Mr. Dillwyn or Mr. Somerford might help her in the affair. In any event she was not sufficiently strong-minded to apply to one of the three, without first taking some friend into her confidence, and friends likely to take the slightest interest in the farmer's concerns had passed beyond Grace's reach. She

had her father, however, and although his views on all such subjects were well known to her, she determined to consult him.

For love of any abstract principle of right, or any general affection for his fellow-creatures, she was perfectly aware he would not lift a finger; for love of her, however, he might be moved to exertion; at any rate, she would try.

She chose the best hour in the day for her attack—that when the cloth was removed, and the dessert reflected itself from the face of a shining mahogany table—when the door was closed, and the servant gone, and the wine placed near the elbow of Mr. Moffat's chair.

A bright fire blazed on the hearth; no sound broke the stillness, save an occasional gust of wind blowing amongst the trees. Mr. Moffat liked the fire, and the perfect sense of solitude. He sat looking into the blaze for a few minutes, and then, turning to his daughter, remarked,—

"You are very quiet this evening, Grace; are you not well?"

"Yes," she replied, "but I am troubled and vexed and perplexed. I want to consult you, papa; may I?"

"Certainly, my dear, having already, no doubt, made up your mind whether you mean to say yes or no."

She smiled and coloured. "I think I have come to an end of my suitors," she answered. "It is quite six months since any one made love to my fortune. I am not in a perplexity of that kind, but I am greatly troubled about poor Amos Scott."

"What is wrong with him now?"

"Lady Jane Somerford is dead, and the land consequently belongs to Mr. Brady."

"Well?" Mr. Moffat's tone was not encouraging. Truth is, feeling a certain amount of self-reproach at not having interested himself in the smallest degree about Mr. Scott's affairs when that interest might have proved beneficial, he would now have preferred ignoring the subject altogether.

Nevertheless, when Grace remained silent, he repeated his inquiring "Well?" with a slight access of irritability.

"Dear papa," she said gravely, "if it vexes you to hear me talk of these things, say so, and I will be silent, only—only—if I may not come to you for advice in my troubles and perplexity, where can I go?"

He stretched out his hand, and drew her towards him

"Gracie darling, talk away, and I will help and advise you if I can; but I am old, and you are young; and young people think it an easy matter to put the world right, and we old people know it cannot be done. That is all. If you will make allowance for me, I will for you. Now say on."

"Amos does not want to leave his farm," she began, after kissing him.

"Naturally—no Irishman ever did," was Mr. Moffat's comment on this announcement.

"Do you think there is any chance of his being able to remain?"

"Not the slightest; Brady has law on his side, and he is not the man to forego his rights—at least, so I am assured. Of the man I myself know nothing, and want to know nothing."

"But you do not think, if it was made worth his while to forego them, he might do so?" she asked.

"Meaning, I suppose—do I not think, if soft-hearted Grace Moffat liked to make herself by some hundreds of pounds a poorer woman than she is to-night, would Mr. Brady give up the Castle Farm? No, my dear, I do not; Mr. Brady has, as I understand, many undesirable qualities. Amongst others he is intensely Irish—using that expression in its most disparaging sense. I do not mean that he is Irish in impulsiveness, recklessness, generosity or folly; but he is Irish in cunning, in hatred, in revenge, in acquisitiveness, in every undesirable quality the worst classes in Ireland hold in common. He has been waiting for this land for years; grudging Scott his possession, and yet gloating over every stone the poor wretch laid, one on the top of another, for his (Brady's) benefit. You may give up the notion, Grace; money will not give Scott back the Castle Farm."

"Do you not think the Glendares might?"

"You can try, Gracie." Mr. Moffat said this very drily.

"I mean do you not think Mr. Brady might be susceptible to the influence of rank?"

"I do not exactly see how rank is to use its influence," was the reply; "and, if I did, I believe Mr. Brady would talk rank over."

"You have not much opinion of the Glendare strength of character," she said, as though in jest.

"Perhaps I have not much opinion of any part of the Glendare character," he answered bitterly. "However,

that is a question we need not discuss to-night. If I understand you rightly, you thought, perhaps, some member of that family might exert his or her influence over Mr. Brady. Suppose the experiment worth trying—who is to try it? Not the young earl, who is dying, no doubt, with a rapidity commendable in the eyes of the next heir, who, in his old age, it is said, is seriously considering matrimony; not that next heir, who, whether earl or not, will never consider any human being except himself; not Lady Glendare, whose star has waned; not Mr. Robert Somerford——"

"Why not?" Grace inquired.

"Well, I am sure I can scarcely say why," returned her father. "Try him, my dear; ask him to use his influence; perhaps he might, if he has any. Perhaps Mr. Brady might be influenced by him. Mr. Somerford has received a certain amount of kindness from us during the last seven years; perhaps he would not object to do us a trifling kindness in return. It is all problematical, Grace. I have not much faith in its satisfactory solution, but you can try."

There was a pause, during which Grace sat with her cheek resting on her hand, her thoughts straying over many subjects, and not one pleasant subject amongst the number.

"Is there not such a thing as equity? she inquired at length.

"Do you mean in law or in public opinion?" asked her father.

"In law."

"There is a thing called equity."

"Would it not help Amos?"

"Most decidedly not. Nothing can help him. No person can help him unless he like to help himself."

"How can he do that?"

"He made a mistake once by acting on his impulses; he had better not make a second by following his impulses again. He has had a long, long term of his farm, but now he will have to leave it, and he ought to leave it peaceably. He cannot fight with the least chance of winning. If the dead earl came back to life, he could not remedy the wrong wrought by his carelessness. Scott might establish a claim against him, if the fact of ever having received money could be recalled to the memory of a Glendare; but money is not what Scott wants; he wants his farm, and all the king's horses and all the king's men could not give

it to him. Brady is the only man who could, and he won't; and the sooner Scott realizes that fact, the better for him and all belonging to him."

"You think his case hopeless, then?"

"Utterly—so far as his present holding is concerned. There are other farms——"

"Yes," she said, "but the Castle Farm is to him just what I am to you."

For a minute after neither spoke. Involuntarily Mr. Moffat's thoughts sped back to that bright summer's day when first he heard of the Earl's Promise, and never thought of asking a question concerning it.

If he had known then, by one sentence he might have averted the misery now close at hand. He might have asked, "What have you got to show for this? where is the earl's receipt? where his promise in any shape that shall avail you hereafter?"

He might, with his knowledge of the world and its weary, wicked ways, have stood between this poor, hard-working, trusting son of the soil, and ruin. It all came back to him, as past sorrows sometimes do, in a bad dream, with their anguish fresh as at the original moment. It all came back: what he might have done—what he had left undone. The years returned, each one laying a reproach at his feet ere gliding away to give place to its successor.

He saw his motherless child returning bright and happy from her visits to the Castle Farm; he beheld the honest faces of those from whom she had never learnt harm—nothing but good; he could recall the words in which she recounted the day's doings, when she went to visit the Scotts, clearly as if it had all happened yesterday; he could see her bringing back treasures for him to inspect, turning out her little pocket that he might look at all she had got.

And when she was ill of some childish disorder, had not Mrs. Scott left her own home to come and help nurse her? Through all the years, had the love and respect and admiration they felt for his darling ever abated?

Ah! well-a-day! Oh! tiring, harassing memory!

"Grace—" he began.

"Yes, papa!" she said, waking from her reverie with a start.

"I am not a demonstrative man; I do not talk in a general way about what I feel; but if money could enable Scott to stay where he is, money should not be wanting."

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The truth of this statement was not likely to be put to the test, but Grace knew he meant what he said—every word.

"If anything could make me happy to-night," she murmured, "that assurance would; but, oh, papa, it is dreadful to think what may come of all this, and we powerless to avert the evil!"

"Ay, Gracie, it is," he answered. "By the time you are my age you will know there are many evils we are powerless to avert. But now listen to me, child: speak to Robert Somerford, and see what he will do in the matter. If that fail, I will see what I can do myself."

She did not reply to him verbally; she only took his hand, and stroked and kissed it.

"Remember," he went on, with a sudden change of tone, "I am now acting in entire opposition to my own principles. I have always believed in letting other people manage their own affairs, in allowing them to get into difficulties if they please, and getting out of them as they can. My opinion about Ireland has always been that her misfortunes arise as much from the laxity as the severity of her landlords. I consider the whole system of tenant-right a mistake. I have been, and am, utterly at a loss to conceive why the fact of a man having rented a farm for a certain number of years, during which he has probably exhausted the land, and allowed the house and outbuildings to fall into decay, should entitle him, and his children after him, to a renewal of the lease. I do not see, if I were a landlord—which happily I am not—why, supposing I prefer one tenant who applies for a farm rather than another, the one I prefer should have his ricks burned down or find his best mare hamstrung. I do not see the beauty of charity; in my opinion it benefits neither him who gives nor him who receives——"

"Oh fie, papa!" she exclaimed.

"My dear, I only speak the truth. What good to themselves or any one else are those sturdy and picturesque beggars who come to you as regularly for their Saturday's dole as if they were annuitants, or had worked for a week's wages?"

"I would rather give them wages," she said; "but what am I to do?"

"I do not interfere with your almsgiving, Grace; nevertheless it seems to me that whilst you are relieving distress, you are perpetuating an evil."

"Do you really believe," she asked, "that the little I give away does me no good?"

"I hope it does you no harm—that is the utmost I can say. I do not think it a wise thing to assist in pauperizing a nation."

"But we are expressly told that the poor shall be with us always."

"Granted; but you do not mean, I suppose, to interpret the poor into professional beggars? I am not much interested in Ireland or the Irish; most persons would call me, and call me truly, an unobservant man; yet there are things passing every day before me to which I cannot shut my eyes; which you, Grace, would see as plainly as I if you did not wilfully shut your eyes. First of all, I behold a number of landlords who reside principally out of Ireland, for the very good reason that they prefer living in London, or Paris, or Florence, or Vienna, wherein they show their discrimination. Immediately there is a cry about the evils of absenteeism, the popular idea being that if a man resides in Ireland he must of necessity spend his income in Ireland likewise, just as though any English duke, or earl, or baronet spent the whole of his income at his country-seat."

"Don't you think there is a little difference between the two cases?" said Grace. "If the Irish landlords resided in Dublin, for instance—— "

"My dear girl, do you suppose that would satisfy tenantry residing in the north? What the malcontents really want is to have the 'good old times' back again; when there was open house and a 'bite and sup' for everybody, broken victuals for the beggars, and a 'drain of whisky and a cut of mate' for persons supposed to be 'earning their bread,' whom chance, design, or necessity led into kitchens, the doors of which always stood wide. To put it in a sentence, people are now living almost at the end of a system, and they want to go back to the beginning of it, to the time when there was plenty of money instead of beggary; to the commencement of borrowing, and mortgaging, and taking credit, instead of paying back, and bankruptcy, and no money, no goods; to the wild, reckless youth of families which are now expiating in unhonoured old age the sins and the follies of that far away time."

There was truth in the picture he drew, and his daughter felt it; but the truth was bitter, the picture too faithful in detail to be perfectly life-like in fact.

"But surely people are not to be blamed because they look back to the good old times with regret, and wish they could all come over again?" said Grace, whose imagination had often held high revel amongst those past days and doings of which her father spoke so contemptuously.

"Were they good old times?" he asked, with unwonted nimation. "By the grain men reap, by the fruit they ather, we can tell the sort of seed, the manner of tree which as sowed and planted by those who went before. There as wild sowing, there has been bitter reaping, and there will be reaping still more bitter before Ireland becomes the paradise patriots (so-called) conjure up before the imagination of an excitable, passionate, dissatisfied people."

"What would benefit Ireland, papa?"

"How can I tell, child? Can the work of centuries be undone in a day? can the education of generations be unlearned at the word of command? If the country and the people be let alone, perhaps they may do something for themselves, but I am extremely doubtful about the matter; it very rarely happens that those who have been for eleven hours praying, entreating, cursing, threatening in order to obtain help, turn round at the twelfth and help themselves."

"How prejudiced you are!" she said, but sorrowfully holding his hand the while; "you only look at the faults, you never think of the virtues and the wrongs."

"My dear Grace, if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is the use of cant expressions. That is probably the reason why I have always eschewed mixing myself up in political matters. There is something particularly offensive to me in the war-cries of party; and, speaking confidentially, I object quite as much to the music of 'Vinegar Hill' as of 'Protestant Boys.' You have managed to adopt some cant phrases, as for instance, that you used just now. Tell me, if you can, what are Ireland's wrongs?"

"The poverty, the distress, the misery."

"Anything else?"

"The way in which the Irish are looked down upon by English people, the laws that press so heavily on the Roman Catholics."

"Anything else?"

"The money earned in a country being spent out of a country, the men who earn that money living so hardly; Ireland being taxed for the benefit of England."

"Anything else?"

"Oh! yes; there are hundreds of other things, but I have mentioned sufficient."

"I think you must have been sitting at the feet of Mr. Hanlon, Grace," answered her father. "If either you or he can prove to me that Ireland is taxed for the benefit of England, I shall be surprised. On the contrary, Ireland is exempt from many most irritating taxes which clever chancellors of the exchequer have devised for the express purpose of reducing that plethora of riches from which Englishmen are supposed to suffer. The amiability of Britannia has even exempted Ireland from the soap-tax; another instance, I conclude, of that brutal ignorance of Irish wants concerning which Mr. Hanlon speaks so freely. To a nation that thinks the use of water unnecessary, it seems nothing else than an insult to give soap free! As to your next point, making my way backwards, men who earn money live hardly everywhere. It is in the nature of things; from the London merchant, toiling to leave a fortune or found a family, to Amos Scott, labouring to meet the next 'gale day,' the worker must live hard. Then you say it is wrong that money earned in a country should be sent out of it. Perhaps so, but I fail to see how you would propose to remedy the evil."

"I would make all the people who derive their income from Ireland, live in Ireland," said Grace energetically.

"It seems to me you would be guilty of a great injustice, then," he replied; "but, however, we will suppose, for the sake of argument, that the plan you suggest is fair and practicable. Suppose, in a word, you have the landlords here, how is the money to be kept in Ireland? Are the nobility to have their portraits painted by local artists? are they to buy the pictures on their walls from some vague Milesian genius, and their statuettes from a Celtic stonemason? Are their wives and daughters to play music composed by the parish organist, on pianos made by an enterprising country carpenter? I suppose you would have the gentlemen wear frieze and carry bog-oak sticks, and ladies array themselves in poplin and Limerick lace. You would have the houses furnished with chairs and tables made from arbutus wood, and the cabinets filled with 'speciments' from the Giant's Causeway and tokens from Killarney. Turf should be burnt universally, instead of English or Scotch

coal. That is the only way to keep money in a country, Grace. Does the programme please you?"

"You are jesting with me," she said, "and yet you would not, if you knew how near it all lies to my heart."

"What lies near your heart, Gracie? which of the grievances? I am running through them as fast as I am able. Which was the next sorrow? Oh! I remember, the Roman Catholics. Well, they certainly had a considerable number of grievances at one time, but that time is past and gone. The Protestants, at one period of England's history, did not sleep exactly on roses, so that perhaps there might be some excuse to urge even in this matter. I do not want to excuse, however. It is a pity, to borrow one of Mr. Hanlon's figures of speech, that the Roman Catholics 'ever were trampled under foot and forced to kiss the shamrock-spangled sod of Erin;' but all I have now to remark about the members of that Church is, they have nothing in the present to complain of, and are quite at liberty to commence taking that ell which is properly supposed to be the next step after receiving an inch. I have no particular prejudice against the Pope, or his clergy, or his followers myself, but I think that part of the population which Mr. Hanlon's 'stalwart peasantry, their country's pride,' call the 'Papishers,' will take one ell—probably many."

Grace sat quite still and silent. This, she said to herself, was the reasoning the friends of Ireland had to listen to and bear patiently. Well, Ireland's time would come. In the meanwhile, the speaker was her father. Although he, being English, could not possibly understand anything about Ireland, still she, Grace, could not argue with and contradict him.

"The next grievance stated," went on Mr. Moffat, "is that the English look down on the Irish. Now, may I not inquire whether that feeling be entirely one-sided? Do not the Irish look down on the English? Have I not heard ridicule directed to their 'mincing talk,' to their 'cutting away' of words, to their drawl, their airs, their notions, the whole tirade ending, 'But what else can be expected from foreigners?' Going down to the lower orders, it is generally supposed few Englishmen ever sound an 'H' in its place, or fail to put one in where it is not wanted. I have laughed over and over again at such ideas, but it certainly never occurred to me that the ignorance in which they originated

was a grievance. Further, English cleanliness is an offence, 'What a dirthy people to nade so much washing!' is a neat way of putting the Irish prejudice into a nutshell."

"Pray stop; pray do;" Grace cried; "we do not agree, we cannot——"

"Why not? I was going on to say that, if I may be allowed to make a bull, all England's best men have been Irishmen; in England they have made their mark, and England has not been chary of recognising their merits."

"She dare not!" exclaimed Grace.

"We won't go into that question," said Mr. Moffat calmly. "It is natural enough when gangs of imperfectly-clothed, strange-tongued, foul-mouthed, ill-looking, unkempt, unwashed Irish sweepings go over to the English harvest, a highly-civilised community, though composed of the lower orders, should—not comprehending that these gangs are the very dregs of the population—think but little of the bulk, judging from the sample; but the upper classes, better informed, look to the higher specimens, and judge accordingly—judge of the capabilities of the Irish on much too exalted a scale."

"And you?" interrupted his daughter.

"I try to hold the scales even, but find it hard work. If O'Connell were to present a glass which could not flatter to the face of his countrymen, even he would find them and their circumstances capable of presenting some very ugly features."

"I love and respect that man!" cried Grace.

"Well, my dear, so far as I am concerned, I have no objection to your doing both. He certainly is a very wonderful man; whether he is a great one cannot be determined yet, those who live to see the end will know. Meanwhile I have nothing else to answer except the misery, the distress, the poverty. All are—why, we cannot tell with any certainty. You talk of England: there are hundreds, thousands of people in London even, who would not let a dog want if they knew it, and yet in wretched garrets men, willing to work, die; into the cold rivers women, unwilling to face the last alternative, throw themselves, as though death were a friend tried and trusted. Do you think there is any place on the face of this earth where misery, distress, poverty are not? I have never seen it; I do not expect ever to see it. Indeed, I consider Kingslough singularly exempt from the common epidemic of chronic and unrelieved poverty. The poverty

is, but the relief is also—often very foolishly given—like yours, Grace."

"Like mine, papa?" and Mistress Grace fired up.

"Like yours, my dear," he answered calmly. "But for you, and such as you, the paupers would work or go into the poorhouse. They say, 'God's mercies are better than the house.' Translated from their glib language the phrase means, 'What we can beg, threaten, or steal, is better than that we receive as a right by line and plummet. The casual halfpenny, with the wind blowing free about our exposed persons, is sweeter than stir-about served in a house, where we are expected to conform to rules.' Let me go through your annuitants. First comes that patriarchal and religious gentleman who, if he could be transported to London, would make his own fortune as a model, and the fortune of any artist who painted him. His is a splendid and venerable presence, is it not? He might be an Irish Melancthon—on canvas. His head is worn bare by taking off his hat. He impresses the beholder with the idea of former respectability and of present sanctity. He can quote the Scriptures with marvellous fluency, and has a text ready for every occasion. His talk is of another world, and when he sees a fitting opportunity he bestows the penny just dropped into his hat on some one who, to use his own expression, 'wants it worse than himself.' He is a prince amongst beggars—a cross between an archbishop and an emperor. Now suppose we trace his career."

"I know what you are going to say, papa, but, it is not true. I am certain it cannot be!" exclaimed Grace vehemently.

"It it quite true. His father had one of those small freehold farms which are amongst the misfortunes of this country. He did little himself, and he brought up his two sons to do less. Nevertheless when he died, one of the two, not our venerable friend, but his brother, worked on his land after the prevailing fashion. He tickled the soil, he went through a pantomime of manuring it. He sowed seed which produced miserable crops, though better than could have been expected. In due time the brother died, and then, while his supposed grief lay heavy on him, the neighbours said, 'It's plantin' time, Barney; arn't ye goin' to put in the corn and the praties?' Solemnly Barney answered, 'The Lord will provide.' Thinking him crazy with trouble,

the kindly-foolish people ploughed his acres, and bringing their seed potatoes and their seed corn, set and sowed for the gentleman within doors. Further, having a certain interest and pride in the matter, 'consate' as they call the feeling, they moulded the potatoes, and dug them up; they reaped the corn and thrashed it. Nothing could have been found to please our friend better. He thanked them in his best manner, lived off the produce they had garnered for him, and spent the winter not unpleasantly. Seed-time came again, but the people did not quite see their way to providing and planting once more, so the land lay untilled, the fields yielded no increase. He sold his cow, his horse, his pigs, his fowls; he sold the furniture, his farm, his house; he lived on the money thus procured so long as it lasted. When it was gone he took to begging, and he has gone on begging ever since, with a brief interval, when he tried 'the house.' One day, while in residence there, he saw some bundles of new spades arrive. Foreseeing what that portended, he left, and returned to his old haunts and his old occupation, and was sufficiently fortunate to please a young lady, who, charmed by his acquaintance with Scripture, actually settled a pension upon him. Then there are your three idiots, who, harmless though they may be, ought never to be allowed to go roaming about the country, frightening children into fits, and disgusting every one who has not a fellow-feeling for the 'naturals.' That deaf and dumb girl you encourage is a perfect nuisance to the neighbourhood, making believe to tell fortunes and to prophesy, in her hideous gibberish, good or evil. As for the women, Grace, I don't like to speak as I feel about them. Harmless, toothless, old hags they seem to you, no doubt, shivering with cold, barefooted, scantily dressed, with a tattered patchwork quilt covering their shoulders; but, so far as I am concerned, rather than meet one of them I would make a *détour* of a mile any day. But, there, I will not vex you any more. We do not agree on this matter, and I see no chance of our ever doing so."

"We are agreed on one point, I am sure," said Grace slowly, "they are poor——"

"They are certainly not millionaires."

"And we have comparative wealth."

"We should not be wealthy long if their wishes were gratified."

"And being rich," went on Grace, unheeding, "I fancy we ought to help those who are poor. They may be lazy, and dirty, and deceitful, and wicked, very possibly they are; but when I lie awake at night, warm and snug, I do not think the remembrance of their sinfulness would make me feel more comfortable if, through any fault of mine, they were sleeping on the bare ground, with the stars looking down upon them, and not a morsel to put in their lips when the day broke. The system may be bad, and the people too, but I did not make either, and I would fain be of use to somebody, if I can."

"You are a good girl, Grace," answered her father, "and if it be a pleasure to you to give, give, it would be no pleasure to me, and so I refrain. To show you, however, that I want to please you, I repeat, if your eloquence fail to touch the possible future earl, I will see whether I can do anything. By-the-way, Grace, we see little, comparatively, of Mr. Somerford now."

"I suppose he is studying how he shall bear his new dignities when they are thrust upon him," said Miss Moffat a little bitterly.

"Have you heard that Lady Glendare was extremely anxious for her son to marry?"

"Impossible!"

"Perfectly possible; she found the young lady, too. But his lordship seemed, so Dillwyn tells me, to consider there had been sufficient division in the family; in a word, he does not think the idea of disappointing his cousin so entrancing a one as it might have appeared formerly. Further, the bride he is bound to will not hear of disappointment, so Mr. Somerford may awake any morning and find himself one step nearer the earldom of Glendare."

"He will have much in his power;" that was all Grace said or meant to say about the matter.

"I am not quite sure of that," replied her father, "the property is frightfully encumbered."

"But a few years of retrenchment and good management would work a great change in the state of affairs," she suggested.

"It will have to be wrought by some one not a Somerford, or I am greatly mistaken," said Mr. Moffat, and then Grace understood that Mr. Dillwyn had been depreciating Robert Somerford to her parent.

A few days later she felt disposed to depreciate him herself. Walking back from Kingslough she met the possible earl riding towards the town. At sight of her he dismounted, and, leading his horse, retraced part of his way in her company.

She had wished to see him, and said so frankly; she wanted to speak about Amos Scott, and ascertain if anything could be done for him, and if so, what? She spoke of the great trouble which had come to her humble friend, spoke out of the fulness of her heart of the wrong he had sustained, of the misery he was suffering, of all the wretchedness she feared might arise from the affair.

"Such cases have been, unhappily, not uncommon," said Mr. Somerford. "It is no wonder a judgment has fallen on our race."

"When you come into the title you will try to put all the wrong right," she said eagerly, forgetting herself—forgetting him, as she thought of Amos Scott, and others in a like predicament, who had been left homeless through the carelessness or wickedness of the Glendares.

"If ever I am Earl of Glendare," he replied, in a tone which told Grace the full extent of the error she had committed, "if ever I have the misfortune to be Earl of Glendare, I expect I shall find everything wrong, and nothing left wherewith to put wrong right. As to Scott, I know not what to say or to do. I will talk the matter over with Dillwyn, and, if anything can be done, I will write to you or call."

She had gone so far, that she felt disposed to go a little farther. She would put affairs upon some different footing, let the consequences be what they would, let her companion think what he chose.

"We have not had the pleasure of seeing much of you lately," she said in a tone studiously careless, though her voice almost trembled as she uttered the words.

"I have been scarcely my own master since Henry went away," he replied. "The fact is——" but there he stopped.

"You did not complete your sentence, I think," she said, after an instant's pause.

"No, it was an awkward sentence, one I ought not perhaps to have begun; but the fact is, my time is so little at my own disposal; my position is now so different from what it was formerly—that—you are so clever, Miss Moffat, I am certain you understand."

"I am not particularly clever," she retorted; "but I fancy

I understand, and I will speak more plainly than you. We, my father and I, made you welcome to come to Bayview; we now make you equally welcome to stay away. Good morning, Mr. Somerford," and, with a slight curtsey, Grace left him, as greatly disconcerted a gentleman as any gentleman who had got what he wanted, but not in the way he wanted it, could possibly be.

For Grace, she was like one who, receiving a wound in the heat of battle, feels neither ache nor pain. She was in such a tempest of passion, that she could not tell where she was hurt, or whether she was hurt at all. A man had trodden her pride under foot. She had been jilted, and that by Robert Somerford!

CHAPTER XIX.

BY THE SAD SEA WAVES.

Time goes on, whether people are glad or sorry, sick or well, rich or poor, and it never paused for a moment, although Miss Grace Moffat was mortified beyond expression because a man had served her as she had served Mr. John Riley.

Fast and loose is a game at which people only like to play when they are the winners. It had been a small matter in the opinion of the girl Grace to discard a lover. Seven years later it seemed no small matter for a lover to discard her.

It is a curious thing to consider how rarely in matters of great or little importance men and women are able to avenge themselves, and yet how surely retribution is compassed for them by others. Thousands of miles distant, John Riley never dreamed his lost love was receiving from Mr. Somerford the same measure she had meted to him. Grace, as was natural, felt very indignant about the matter, but it never occurred to her that it had been rather nice of John Riley not to feel anger against her in the days that could never come back.

It was not a pleasant experience, but I am very certain that she was the better for it; that the heiress, who found her money could not buy everything for her, could no more prevent slights being put upon her than if she were a girl without a sixpence, was much improved by the discovery.

In affairs of the heart, when their own is not touched,

women are as instinctively cruel to men as children to insects, perhaps for the same reason; and if the lesson which makes them "feel too" be sharp, it is nevertheless better for them to understand that what may seem fun to their ignorance is death to their victims.

The blow to Grace's pride was so severe that it almost deadened the pain of the wound received by her fancy. I use the word advisedly, for her heart had never been very deeply concerned in the matter.

Robert Somerford never was to her what Daniel Brady had been to poor Nettie. She never loved him with an absorbing attachment; if she had, however, that love must indeed be remarkable which can subsist for years on hope and expectancy. People may marry after a probation of this kind, as they may marry after a long engagement, but the probability is that the final wooing and wedding will prove a somewhat prosaic affair.

No; now the scales were removed from her eyes, Grace Moffat knew she had never cared for Robert Somerford as she understood a girl should care for the man she intended to take as husband. She had been dazzled by his good looks, his accomplishments, his manners, his rank, his prospects. She had felt as the poor people around her would have said that she was "getting value for her money." Oh, that money! In the first bitterness of her disappointment Grace wished she had not a penny. "Then perhaps somebody might care for me for myself," she thought, as if John Riley had not cared more for her little finger than for all her fortune.

But, then, she did not care for John Riley, which made the difference.

One mortification, however, Miss Moffat was spared. The world (that is to say, her world) never knew exactly how the matter stood, for the home thrust she administered had only the effect of bringing Mr. Somerford as a more frequent visitor to her father's house. He wrote Grace a note, complaining of how utterly she had misjudged him, and declaring that till the last hour of his life he could never forget Bayview; the dear friends who lived there; the happy hours he had spent beneath its roof. What he said was specious enough, and Grace, wise in her generation, and mindful always of what "Kingslough might think," accepted his explanation.

But she knew perfectly well that she had not misinterpreted his meaning; and he knew this. Perhaps because he did know it, he came to the house more frequently, feeling relieved at the idea that now Grace could not expect him to propose for her, and yet with a vague idea that at some future period he might ask her to marry him.

But for his expectations he would have asked her to do so long before. He was very fond of her, but he was not one half so fond of her as of himself. Never had he liked her better than when she said he could stay away. There was a spirit and a directness, and a comprehension about her swift retort which gave a piquancy to the transaction.

And he liked to think no one knew, no one would ever know, anything about it excepting they two. He felt satisfied she would feel as little desire to speak of that short skirmish as he. They understood each other, and the only drawback to the pleasure of her society he had ever felt was removed. Altogether it was as well she had spoken: altogether Grace acknowledged it was better he should still visit at Bayview.

But she could never care for him again. Hero in her eyes he might never seem more.

It was at this period he would have talked to Mr. Dillwyn concerning Amos Scott's affairs, had that gentleman not told him he declined to meddle in the transaction, that there was nothing to be done about the matter, that if the old earl rose from the dead he could not give Scott the promised lease, and that, in fine, there was no use in discussing the question.

"If you believe your uncle had the man's money, and feel any desire to repay the amount—pay it," finished Mr. Dillwyn; "but neither you nor anybody else, except Brady, can give him a longer term of the Castle Farm, and Brady won't give it to him."

"You think not?"

"I am sure not!" was the reply.

Nevertheless Mr. Somerford rode over to Maryville in the hope of affecting Mr. Brady's heart by his powers of persuasion. But Mr. Brady was firm. He would only, so he declared, have been too glad to accede to Mr. Somerford's request had the land been any other land than the Castle Farm, and the man any other man than Amos Scott.

"If I were to give in to him now," he said, "I might

leave Maryville. He would regard my concession as an act of weakness; he would be setting himself up in opposition against me at every turn. I should have no peace of my life. It really grieves me, Mr. Somerford, to have to refuse a request coming from one of your family, and more particularly as I understand Miss Moffat is also interested in the matter. But if you put yourself in my place, you will see, I think, how utterly impossible it is for me to do what you ask."

All of which, and many other regrets, and apologies and excuses, Mr. Somerford repeated to Miss Moffat, who, thanks to the fresh light thrown across his character, understood perfectly that if the earl's nephew had stood in Mr. Brady's shoes, he would most likely have acted in a somewhat similar manner. As indeed why should he not?

Even Grace would have been unable to say with authority that Mr. Brady ought to give up his rights for any other reason than because "it was such a pity of poor Amos," and this sentiment, although pretty coming from a woman's lips, would scarcely, I imagine, satisfy a jury as to the justice of a man's claim. Undoubtedly it was a pity of poor Amos; but then, as Mr. Dillwyn remarked, he had no one to thank for his misfortunes except himself.

Amos, on the contrary, thought every one was to blame for his misfortunes except himself, and Mr. Brady he regarded as the chief of the offenders, because, knowing Scott wanted the farm, he had gone and taken it "over his head."

"I shall fight it out with you," said Scott, shaking his fist in Mr. Brady's face.

"Very well," answered Mr. Brady, "I am content." And it required no seer to tell what the end of the matter would be as regarded the Scotts.

Meanwhile, however, a strong feeling was developing itself against Mr. Brady. Popular opinion, which in other places besides Ireland generally rears itself in opposition to law, considered Scott had been hardly done by—that "Brady had taken an advantage of him,"—that "he knew well enough the decent man had paid his savings honestly come by, to the earl"—that the "Castle Farm could be no more to him nor any other farm," and that "he might have taken the sum Mr. Moffat offered him to let Scott and his wife and the boys and girls stay on in the old home."

"But it's himself is the hard man," said even the beggars,

when rehearsing Mr. Brady's sins of omission and commission.

"An' it'll come home to him yet," chorused dozens of self-constituted partisans, for it was a noticeable fact in the affair that Mr. Brady was the person on whose head all the vials of righteous wrath were poured.

As for the earl, "In course a gentleman like him had plenty to think about; and it was no miracle, with all the trouble he had on him, that Scott's lease should have slipped his memory."

There was some truth in this view of the question, and it was a natural view, at all events to a nation who probably never will be induced to understand that as much evil may be wrought through carelessness as through set purpose, that the indifference of selfishness may curse as many lives as the deliberate plotting of a clever schemer.

Be this as it may, however, people were beginning to take sides in the matter. One party considered Scott ought to be supported; another, though perfectly indifferent to his opponent, thought Brady was entitled to enter into possession.

"The law is clear enough in the case," said Lord Ardmorne, "and those who are inciting the poor fellow to resist the law, are doing him but a sorry kindness."

Wherein the marquis was quite correct, only he overlooked the fact that Scott was quite ready to resist the law without any incitement from his fellows. Further, if such a paradox be admissible, he believed the law to be on his side; that is, he was looking out for a solicitor whom he could persuade to be of his opinion. Somewhere on the earth justice would be done him, if not in one court, why in another.

The man was unreasonable, mad if you will; but Mr. Brady, as he imagined, was trying to despoil him of the labour of years, the fruits of his toil, and it is not alone in Ireland that people who fancy they have been ruined without any fault of their own are irrational and implacable.

Besides, he had a vague idea that if he could pour the tale of his wrongs into the ears of the proper person, Brady might be worsted, and he righted; and there is perhaps nothing more difficult to combat than a conviction, decided, though formless, of this kind.

As for Grace, she was growing sick at heart of the whole business. All her sympathies were with Scott and his family, but she had sense enough to see there could be only

one end to the course the farmer had elected to tread—ruin; and sometimes she could not help agreeing in her father's openly-expressed opinion that the best thing which could now occur at the Castle Farm would be for Amos to take a fever and die, and so leave the mother and children free to quit the place, and let those who were willing to help them do so.

It was whilst things were in this unsatisfactory state that Mr. Hanlon one day brought Grace a note from Mrs. Brady. He presented it with formal politeness, saying he had been asked to give it in private into Miss Moffat's own hands.

"Will you not read it?" he asked, as Grace held the letter unopened.

"Does Mrs. Brady wish me to return an answer by you?" was the reply, spoken coldly enough; for Miss Moffat by no means approved of the messenger chosen by her old friend.

"No; as I understand the matter, that note only contains a request which Mrs. Brady is sure you will comply with. She had no other means," he went on hurriedly, "of sending to you: she was afraid of the letter miscarrying in any way, of it falling by mischance into her husband's possession."

"Did she tell you so?" Grace inquired.

"There are some things, Miss Moffat, one knows by intuition."

Grace broke the seal and read the few lines Nettie had traced; then, turning to Mr. Hanlon, she said, "Do you know by intuition the contents of this note?"

"I gathered from a few words Mrs. Brady let fall that she wishes to see you," he replied, ignoring the ironical repetition of his own remark contained in Miss Moffat's inquiry.

"Do you know why she wishes to see me?" Grace persisted.

"I do not," was the reply. Then more earnestly, "I assure you, on my honour, I have not the slightest idea——"

"Mr. Hanlon," Grace began, "I always was, I always shall be, attached to Mrs. Brady; but I do not like commencing any correspondence with her which involves mystery and secrecy."

"That I can well understand; but from what I have seen of Mrs. Brady you may be certain she has some sufficient reason for her request; from what I have seen of

Mr. Brady, it might be perilous for her openly to disobey his commands."

"Perilous!" exclaimed Grace.

"I use the word advisedly—and—confidentially," he answered. "It may be," he went on, "that in meeting Mrs. Brady as she asks, you may be doing her a great service. In any case you cannot be doing her an unkindness, for she is very lonely and—very unhappy."

Grace did not reply, she took up Nettie's note and read it over once more.

"This evening, soon after dusk, I shall be at the Lone Rock. I want to speak to you; meet me there. *Be sure you do.* Burn this note, and say nothing about it to any one."

When she had finished, she said,—

"You are going back to Maryville, I suppose?"

"No, I may not perhaps be there again for weeks, unless, indeed, you wish me to convey a message to Mrs. Brady."

"It is not a matter of any consequence," was the reply; "I only wanted to let her know I would do as she asks."

"That I think she expected," he said; and then, having completed his mission, and finding that the conversation languished, Mr. Hanlon took his leave.

It would be difficult to say why Miss Moffat shrank from the idea of the interview suggested by Nettie. Had Mrs. Brady proposed coming to Bayview, Grace would have welcomed her with open arms; but she distrusted mysteries. She could not help remembering all the evil Nettie's secret ways of proceeding had wrought in the days gone by, and she could not endure being a party to a clandestine meeting, the note appointing which was brought to her, of all people in the world, by Mr. Hanlon.

Instinct in most women is a truer guide than reason, and instinctively Grace felt that Nettie's note portended trouble; that her choice of a messenger was indiscreet; that matters at Maryville were even worse than most people imagined; and that time, instead of drawing Mr. Brady and his wife closer together, was widening the breach that had been made when injudicious but well-meaninfg friends forced Nettie on a man who was but half willing to marry her.

"I must try to gain her confidence," thought Grace, as though after seven years she could hope to win a trust which Nettie then withheld. Mrs. Brady had never confided in any one. It was not likely she intended to change her tactics now.

The grounds at Bayview extended to the seashore. At high tide the trees spread their branches over the water, and when storms were fierce and the waves came rolling in, the long gravel-walk on the top of the sloping bank was impassable. In calm weather, however, the place gave one the idea of utter peace and repose, and Grace had always been fond of wandering upon the shore, looking now away to the open sea, and again to the soft green hills, with Kingslough nestling under their shadow.

Not a stone, not a tree, not an effect of sun and shade, not an illusion of twilight, not a fairy touch of moonlight, but was familiar to Grace; and as she neared the Lone Rock in the growing darkness of a still summer's evening her accustomed eye saw a figure leaning against the stone, which came forward to meet her.

"Nettie!"

"Grace!" That was all; then they sat down, hand clasped in hand, and kept silence for a minute.

It was broken by Nettie.

"I knew you would come," she said.

"Yes." Grace could not find it in her heart to speak the word she had intended, at least not then.

"Perhaps you thought it strange my not going to Bayview?" resumed Nettie; "but I dare not."

"Why?" asked the other.

"In the first place, because Mr. Brady never would have forgiven me if I had; in the next, because he would have wanted to know what I could have to say to you."

"And supposing he had?" Grace inquired.

"When I have told you, there will be no need to suppose how he would feel about the matter," replied Nettie shortly. "Before, however, I get to that part of my story, I want to say something. When I was first married, I felt your not coming to see me very keenly. I was bitter against you; I am not bitter now. I am glad you never entered Maryville; you were right."

"That is a point on which I have never been able to satisfy myself," said Grace sadly. "I did not want to desert you, Nettie, but I could not run counter to the wishes and desires of all my friends."

"We will leave your friends and their wishes out of the question," was the answer. "I tell you I am glad. I say it was right for you to have done with me. It was I who

deserted you; it was I who, without counting the cost, gave all for love and the world well lost."

"I cannot ask you questions which might pain you," said Grace; "but anything you like to tell me, do, though I am almost afraid to hear what your married life has been."

"You need not be afraid, for you will never hear, neither you nor anybody else," Nettie replied. "I have borne, and I can bear. No human being knows what I have borne but myself."

There was a little catching sob, and then she proceeded,—

"Grace, you must never let any one suspect how you got to know what I am going to tell you."

"Perhaps you ought not to tell me?" suggested Miss Moffat.

"You will be able to judge better about that when you know what it is," retorted her companion.

"But I do not like having to keep secrets," Grace pleaded. "I never did all my life; they are always productive of anxiety, or misery, or shame."

"Don't talk nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Brady; "people must have secrets, and they must hear and tell them too sometimes. The matter I have to speak about does not corncer me, though it concerns people in whose prosperity you ought to feel interested."

"Do you mean the Scotts?"

"No, I do not mean the Scotts; I mean a family who will find themselves in a worse position than the Scotts some day, if they are not wise in time. If John Riley were at home, I should not have troubled you about the matter."

"What has John Riley to do with it?" asked Grace.

"Just this much: you know Woodbrook is heavily mortgaged? of course you do, that was one reason why you would not marry John."

"Nettie"!

"It is of no use interrupting me in that ridiculous manner," said Mrs. Brady pettishly. "If John had been a rich man, I believe you would have married him; but as he was only a poor, honest fellow, with a plain face, who loved you with all his heart and soul, you sent him adrift, and let him go to India, where I hope he may make a fortune, and come home, and meet with some good, sensible girl, richer than you were. Yes, you may take away your hand; I did not come here to-night to flatter you, be sure of that."

"What did you come for?" asked Miss Moffat; "do not beat about the bush, and talk of all sorts of irrelevant matters, but tell me in a word what it is you want to say."

"In a word, then, you know Woodbrook is mortgaged?"

"Yes; it has always been so."

"Do you know who holds that mortgage?"

"I once heard, but I have forgotten the name."

"Do you think you could remember it if I told you?"

"If any good purpose were to be served by my recollection, I would try," answered Grace.

"Well, then, the mortgage is really held by Mr. Daniel Brady of Maryville."

"You are not serious?"

"Am I not? The Rileys may find it a very serious matter to them, whatever you may think."

"But how could he hold the mortgage without the General being aware of the fact?"

"I cannot tell you, for I do not know myself. All I am able to say, he does hold it."

"Are you quite certain?"

"As certain as that we are sitting here."

"From whom did you hear this?"

"From Mr. Brady's own lips."

"And what does he say about it?"

"He never said a word to me concerning the affair."

"But I thought you heard from his own lips that he held the mortgage?"

"So I did, but he was not talking to me."

"To whom was he talking?"

"To his lawyer, and I was listening: and if he knew I had listened, he would kill me—that is," added Nettie reflectively, "if he was not afraid of being hung."

"Why should he mind your knowing about it?" Grace asked with a shiver.

"Why should he mind your knowing about it? why should he mind the General knowing?" inquired Nettie contemptuously. "Because if once the Rileys' eyes were opened, they would move heaven and earth to pay the interest regularly, or to pay off the mortgage altogether. If they do not this, he will own Woodbrook yet, as surely as he owns the Castle Farm now."

"What can be done?" said Grace helplessly; "do you think I ought to go to the General?"

"I am sure you ought to do nothing of the kind," answered Nettie. "He is an old man, and he never was a very wise one. Do you ever write to John?"

"Never."

"What a shame! If I had not liked him well enough for a husband, I would have tried to keep him as a friend."

"Surely we need not talk of that now?" suggested Grace.

"Mrs. Hartley has not given him up, I suppose?" said Nettie, unheeding the interruption.

"She hears from him frequently," was the answer.

"But then you never see her," remarked Mrs. Brady.

"She often asks me to go to England, but I always refuse."

"Home attractions are so great," said Nettie demurely.

"I am very fond of my home."

"Are you still very fond of something else, or, to speak more correctly, of somebody else?"

"I do not exactly understand."

"Do you intend to marry Mr. Somerford or not?"

"It will be time enough for me to answer that question when he asks me it himself."

"I wish you would answer me though, Grace," said Mrs. Brady earnestly. "When Robert Somerford asks you to be his wife, what reply will you make?"

"He may never put such a question," answered Grace, with an uneasy laugh, "so what is the use of talking about it?"

"He will put just such a question before very long," persisted Mrs. Brady; "you are neither a child nor a very foolish girl any more. You are a year older than I am, and I feel as if I had lived a century at least. Tell me truly what answer you will return; do tell me, Grace, for the sake of the days when you loved me?"

"I love you still, Nettie!"

Impatiently Mrs. Brady turned aside the remark.

"I do not want to know whether you love me or not. What can that signify now? I want to know if you mean to marry Mr. Somerford when he asks you."

"How do you know he ever means to do so?" said Grace evasively.

"I will tell you when you have replied to my question. Will you say 'yes' or 'no.'"

"In that entirely supposititious case I should say 'No.'"

"Really and truly?"

"Really and truly, I shall never be more to him than I am now."

"Notwithstanding his handsome face!"

"Not if he were ten times handsomer than he is."

"He is going to act extremely handsomely by you," said Nettie, picking up a pebble and throwing it out into the sea as far as she could. "He means to propose to Miss Middleton, and when she refuses him, as she will do, he intends to ask you."

There was a matter-of-fact coolness about this statement which took away Miss Moffat's breath. Finding she made no comment, her friend continued, "I heard that also, the other evening. Miss Middleton is the daughter of a great English brewer, who has bought an estate near Kilcurragh; but her father will not hear of the match. Some one has been prejudicing him against Mr. Robert, so you see the gentleman will fall between two stools."

"It does not matter to either you or me where he falls," said Grace hurriedly.

"Not much certainly," agreed Mrs. Brady. "And now that I have told you my news, I will go home again."

"Do not go yet!" entreated Miss Moffat. "Tell me what I ought to do about the General."

"Your own sense will tell you that," Nettie answered; "only, Grace, on whatever course you may decide, keep my name out of the affair. Never let any one suspect you heard of it from me."

"Are you not afraid of trusting Mr. Hanlon?" asked her friend gently.

"I do not trust him."

"But he knew you wished to see me?"

"Yes; but nothing more. He does not know anything from me; though, of course, he cannot avoid seeing."

"What does he see, dear?" asked Grace, replying rather to the quiver in Nettie's voice than to the words she spoke.

"It is no matter," was the answer, and the sentence sounded almost like a sob.

Grace's arms were about her neck; Grace's tears were on her cheek. "Nettie darling, am I not the nearest friend you ever had? cannot you trust me with your trouble, whatever it may be?"

Gently and sorrowfully Nettie unclasped the twining arms, and put away the lips which were pressed to hers.

"It is no matter," she repeated; "I do not want to talk of myself at all. I must go now, Grace, I must indeed."

And she rose as she spoke, and drawing her dark shawl closely about her slight figure, pressed Grace's hand in token of farewell.

Grace held her hand tight.

"When shall I see you again?" she asked.

"Sometime perhaps—perhaps never," was the reply. "Sometime, Grace, when you are happily married and have a tribe of bairns about you, or are a rich old maid with no bairns at all, I may ask you to give a helping hand to my children. It is the thought of them that breaks my heart."

"You lost one!" Grace said pityingly.

"Two," corrected Nettie, "and sometimes I wish I had lost them all."

"You must not speak in that way, dear!" expostulated Grace.

"I know it," was the reply, "and so I do not want to speak."

"Will you let me come and see you?"

"No, *never*," said Nettie decidedly. "There is only one thing you can do for me now, and that is, save the Rileys. I think Mrs. Hartley will find a way to do it. At all events she can warn John. He did the best he could for me once, and I should not like to see his father and mother and sisters beggars."

"But why should Mr. Brady want to beggar them?" asked Grace, who could not yet grasp the full meaning and importance of all Nettie had told her.

"He hates them," was the answer, spoken calmly and evenly. "He hates everybody, I think, but he has an especial aversion to the Rileys, because they made him marry me."

"You were married to him before they interfered."

"I am not so sure of that; I shall never know for a certainty whether the first ceremony, if one could call it a ceremony, was legal. In any case, but for the Rileys, he could have turned round some day and told me it was valueless. Besides that, the General and John were not very civil to him, and none of the family ever took any notice of me after—after—I left my aunt."

"Scant causes to produce such great results!" said Miss Moffat reflectively.

"More than sufficient, however," answered Nettie.

"Mr. Brady must be very rich," remarked Grace after a moment's silence.

"He is not rich; he is poor, he will always be poor; but he has the command of money, he knows people ready to advance it. I suppose if you and I wanted to raise money for any good purpose, we should not be able to get it, but if we desired it to compass any evil, I do not doubt but we should have more than we could use."

"You seem to entertain some nice comfortable theories concerning life," said Grace, trying to speak cheerfully.

"I have no theories," answered Mrs. Brady. "Everything with me resolves itself into practice. I used to have dreams and fancies, but I have none now, except one which haunts me night and day."

"What is that?"

"Never mind, it may come true or it may not. I wonder, Grace," she suddenly added, "what you and I will be doing seven years hence, if we live so long?"

"I hope you will be happier, Nettie."

"I never said I was unhappy, did I?" asked the young wife. "Some people are born to be very happy, I suppose, and some—are not so fortunate. It was not such a bright fortune which lay before me when I was a girl, that I need lament over my present lot. I have not everything I should like, it is true, but I do not complain; no one ever heard me complain."

"I would rather hear you complain, Nettie, than talk in the way you have done to-night."

"Ah! that is because you do not know, because you cannot understand."

She was gone. Grace would have followed, but she waved her back.

"You must not come with me," she said. "Good-bye."

Slowly and mournfully the waves rippled in on the sands as Grace Moffat walked homeward, her thoughts intent on Nettie and her extraordinary confidence.

If the statement she had made were true, and it was impossible to doubt its accuracy, then Mr. Brady intended to oust the Rileys out of Woodbrook, as he proposed to turn the Scotts out of the Castle Farm.

As Nettie had said, it does not require so much money to

compass evil as it does to effect good. It is easier to ruin a man than to establish his fortunes.

Mortgaging in Ireland was not in those days so unusual a thing as to induce general ignorance concerning its possible and probable results; and although Mr. Moffat had never borrowed a shilling, never forestalled his income by an hour, still Grace had heard enough of monetary embarrassments among her acquaintances to understand tolerably well what "foreclosing" would mean on the Woodbrook estates.

Her own fortune, it may be remembered, had at one time been destined to redeeming that mortgage, and giving ease to a family who had never known the meaning of the word: but when she refused Mr. Riley, of course his relatives had relapsed into their old state of embarrassment, which was, however, in their eyes, relieved by John's letters and John's remittances from India. If, therefore, the interest were accumulating, if the indebtedness were increasing, if Mr. Brady were the real mortgagee, Grace, without any gift of second sight, could see the end which must come ere long, unless steps to avert the catastrophe could be taken, and that without delay.

And the sea rippled in over the sands, and the scent of the flowers and shrubs floated on the air as they had done that night when she refused her first lover, and sent him out into the world to seek such fortune as the world had in store for him.

CHAPTER XX.

WHAT THE WAVES WHISPERED.

There is no sadder sound in nature than the plashing of the waves on a lonely shore in the twilight of a calm evening. As nothing more mournful can well be seen than an expanse of sand stretching away to the far-out tide under the first glimpse of light, so there is something melancholy beyond expression in that perpetually recurring sob with which the sea flings itself upon the land.

The sound is not soothing because it is intermittent, and the ear aches with waiting for its return. It lacks the fury of tempest, and consequently fails to kindle the imagination. Not even the soughing of autumn winds amongst the trees

is so plaintive and depressing as the moaning of the sea. One could almost fancy that spirits haunted the shore, and kept weeping and making lamentations bitter, though low. The cry of the bittern cutting through the night is weird and sorrowful enough, but it does not sink the soul with such a burden of utter depression as that caused by the long drawn-out sigh of the quiet sea.

There are special times and particular moods of mind when, even to those who love the ocean best, the monotonous lament I have tried to describe becomes almost unendurable. It recalls unpleasant memories of the past, it awakens dismal forebodings concerning the future, it shadows the present with a mantle of gloom, and it tinges every thought and recollection with a touch of involuntary superstition. In darkness and loneliness people grow fanciful and imaginative. Provide melancholy with a calm evening, a quiet shore, and the sea lapping in upon the sands, and the solitary muser becomes her victim with scarce a struggle. Melancholy, at all events, held Grace Moffat captive as she walked slowly back from the Lone Rock, thinking as she went.

Given youth, beauty, health, fortune, should not her thoughts have been pleasant? To all outward appearance Grace Moffat had not a care; and, in reality, any trouble she might feel arose principally, if not entirely, from her high ideal of life's responsibilities, from her intense sympathy with the sins, sorrows, and perplexities of her fellow-creatures.

Through the gathering darkness she sauntered slowly homeward, and her thoughts brooded thus: "Beauty! what does it profit? Has it won for me a single true heart? Wealth! what use have I made of it hitherto, of what avail shall it prove in the future! Youth! it passes away, it is gone in an hour; whilst the soft green buds of April open into leaf, behold May comes on us unawares; and almost ere we can scent the perfume of the hawthorn, June's roses are blooming, have bloomed, are dead. Friends! they die, they change, they leave us. The plans and the projects of life, they are either incapable of fulfilment, or our power is not competent to perfect them. The hopes, the dreams, the aspirations of early spring are chilled, dispelled, disappointed, ere the first breath of winter has frosted over the fair landscape. And what is left?" the girl reflected, pausing as she asked the question.

Slowly and solemnly the waves swept in upon the shore, and then, flinging out a wreath of foam, retreated with a sob.

"The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together," Grace murmured.

She was not free from the vice of quoting half-texts of Scripture and fancifully adapting them to personal impressions, which is the speciality of young people, but from which persons who are older and ought to know better are often unable altogether to excuse themselves.

Even the sea seemed to her imagination to be in pain.

"What is the matter with me to-night, I wonder?" she marvelled. It was not altogether the long, slow sweep of the tide; it was not the remembrance of an ideal existence still unfulfilled, destined possibly never to be fulfilled, it was something conceived by regret and repentance which struggled within her for expression.

The tones of Nettie's voice, full at times of the bitterness of suppressed grief, at others of the pathetic tenderness of unshed tears, of unspoken suffering, had pierced Grace's heart; and, mingling with the feelings of impotent regret which she expressed for the sorrow golden-haired Annette had wrought for herself, came other memories, of a man who had loved her very dearly, in whose voice she had once heard the same agony of repressed emotion, who, in the gathering twilight, with the scent of the flowers floating on the evening air, and the sound of the waters creeping in upon the shore, had received his final answer, and said "Good-bye" and "God bless you, Grace!" in the same breath.

Yes, he had loved her; Grace felt Nettie was right in this. Let her fortune have exercised as large an influence as it might, he must have entertained perhaps as true an affection for her as she had ever inspired.

"But he has got over that long, long ago," she said to herself, with a faint, cynical smile which the darkness concealed. "How will it be with them all, though, if his father loses Woodbrook?"

How, indeed! Grace had already traced the outlines of a picture, the grouped figures in which and the grim accessories whereof filled her with dismay. She had not evolved it altogether out of the intricacies of her imagination, for once upon a time she chanced to behold a family party who might well enough have sat for the Rileys of the possible future.

This was before Mrs. Hartley left Kingslough, when it struck that lady duty required a visit to be paid to a certain Mrs. Wallace, of whose hospitality she and the late Mr. Hartley had partaken when the Wallaces lived near Glenwellan. With that curious fancy for returning to the scenes of bygone greatness which is characteristic of those whose greatness has been of a limited and local description, the family one summer decided on reuniting and "taking the sea" at Kilcurragh. Thither Mrs. Hartley invited Grace to accompany her; and Grace, though she hated a covered car, and that covered car a hired one, with a hatred which can only be appreciated by those who loathe that species of conveyance, consented.

Mrs. Hartley, who would neither make use of her friends' carriages, nor keep one herself, hired a car for the expedition, and on the way entertained Grace with the exposition of those practical ideas for which she was famous.

First, she recited the glories of the Wallace family. She rehearsed the horses they rode, the carriages they drove, the servants they employed, the hangers-on they maintained. She described the dinners, where nothing was lacking save solvency; the open house, which provided everything for every one save peace of mind for the owners.

Nor were the glories of "The Castle" forgotten; the attire of Mrs. Wallace when she attended successive parties at the absurd little Dublin Court, more ridiculous in its way than the Courts of petty states abroad which have only about five pounds a week of revenue to maintain their magnificence, was duly described. As beads and rum to the Indian squaws and chiefs, so Dublin Castle to those Irish ladies and gentlemen who could never hope to enter Buckingham Palace; and the analogy had not failed to strike so keen and bitter an observer of Hibernian character as Mrs. Hartley.

"But how did the ruin come about?" asked Grace, wearying of the detestable sideway motion of the car and her companion's satire. "What had these unhappy people done or left undone that they should be poor as you say?"

"How did the ruin come about?" Mrs. Hartley repeated, putting on her judicial look and her black cap before pronouncing sentence upon the sins and shortcomings of those "misguided Irish Wallaces." "My dear, how does ruin come about? It comes through folly or misfortune, or carelessness or thoughtlessness, which are in England syno-

nymous terms for reckless hospitality, mad dissipation, unwarrantable expenditure, and utter selfishness. In this country, which may some day be a great and wonderful country, but not till it is repeopled, re-religioned, recropped, rebuilt, and remodelled, you have a somewhat coarse proverb about foolish people who eat the calf out of a cow. Grace, child, in Ireland everybody is either starving the cow or eating the calf. The Wallaces ate the calf, as the Somerfords ate theirs, as fifty others I could name devoured it, feet, head, and tail."

"And they lost everything," said Grace sorrowfully.

"They ate the calf, and then the cow, and then the cow's pasture," Mrs. Hartley replied. "They kept open house till after the bailiffs came; they danced, feasted, dressed, kept up an appearance to the last with a courage worthy of a better cause; then came the collapse; the girls were invited to stay 'with friends;' the young men 'got appointments;' the father and mother went away for the benefit of Mr. Wallace's health. Then the place was sold; Lord Ardmorne bought it; then we knew Mr. Wallace was living on his wife's small fortune; then we heard the boys had gone to the bad, as all such boys do; then we understood the young ladies were governesses and companions, *voilà tout*."

"Do you think they will like to see you?" Grace asked, feeling that if she were in the Wallaces' position her spirits would not be particularly elated by the visit.

"I cannot tell whether they will care to see me," answered Mrs. Hartley, "but I know they will be glad to say I have called. The twelve-and-sixpence this expedition must cost me would have been better in their pockets, no doubt, but there is a difficulty about suggesting an idea of that kind. The young ladies occasionally send me purses and useless articles of a similar description to dispose of amongst my friends, but as I have no friends who would buy them—at least, as I should be very sorry to ask my friends to do anything of the sort—I send my own money to the fair sellers and the goods to the next bazaar held for charitable or religious purposes. It is always a pity for the children of the last owner in such a case as this; for them all the harass, all the mortification, all the petty shifts, all the contemptible meannesses which genteel poverty is forced to practise; for them no cakes and ale, other people have had all that before they were thought of."

"It is very hard for them," Grace agreed; and she thought it eminently hard for the Wallaces when she found them "taking holiday" in poor lodgings, where they could have only one sitting-room, filled at low water with a fine odour of wholesome tar, and unwholesome sea and land waif and decaying fish; when she beheld the once burly, reckless squire, who had ridden after the hounds so long as he could feed a hunter; who had sung the best song, told the best story, been the most jovial companion of any man in the county, sitting drearily in an-easy chair by the window, dressed in old clothes that hung about his body, amusing himself by looking through a telescope little bigger than a child's plaything at the vessels in the offing.

And then there was the mother, careworn and prematurely old, dispensing tea, the last hospitable offer possible for her to make in their altered circumstances, too genuine a gentlewoman to apologize for the poverty of their surroundings, too absolutely a woman not to feel the change of position bitterly; the girls making the best of things and their holidays at the same time; talking of the kindness of the friends with whom they had been "staying," of the pleasant places they had seen, of the great people far enough away from Kilcurragh and their real life you may be sure—they had met.

But there were grey streaks in Miss Wallace's hair, though any one, to have heard her talk, might readily have imagined she had really spent the years since her father left Glenwellan in travelling about for her own pleasure, and visiting on equal terms the nobility and gentry of the United Kingdom; whilst the beauty, the youngest, had lost her looks, and it was hopeless that even the size and colour of her once celebrated eyes should yet win her a husband rich enough and foolish enough to try to reinstate her family in their former rank.

Pitiful—yes, indeed it was—to see the struggle those people waged between trying to forget the privations of their actual present and striving to remember the adventitious glories of their best-to-be-forgotten past.

Terrible! ay, truly, the fight to preserve appearances, to keep up a semblance of their old position by means of that rank impostor called genteel poverty; as if poverty could ever be genteel, as though the moment it tried to be any thing besides respectable, it did not stand a good chance of becoming disreputable.

All the depth of this reverse Grace had seen with her own eyes, all the comments which friends, enemies, and acquaintances could make upon it she had heard with her own ears, and though none of the Rileys, excepting John and the General, had ever been prime favourites with this favoured one of fortune, still there was something dreadful in the bare idea of people who had once held up their heads in the land exchanging the anxieties how to keep a fine estate for the worse trouble of considering how to provide daily bread. John would have to maintain them ; but then, unless he was doing remarkably well, how could he compass that if he were ever to marry ? Perhaps he never would marry, though that seemed an unlikely solution of the difficulty. Perhaps some of his sisters might marry, which, considering the state of Ireland and their fortunes, and the extreme disproportion of marriageable girls and marrying men, seemed more unlikely still.

Suddenly a fresh idea struck Grace. The girls would go to India. Why had not they gone before ? All girls who had no money and any relations in India went there, and they all married well, and came home, according to Mrs. Hartley, lazy and delicate.

But then perhaps John, who had peculiar and straitlaced notions concerning women, would object to engage with his sisters in a matrimonial speculation of that description ; and indeed Grace felt no doubt he would. Well, then, so long as he remained single, if the worst came to the worst, in other words, supposing Woodbrook were lost, he would be able to contribute to the support of his family ; and when he married, his wife would ask one of the girls to go and live with them.

Then, supposing that one girl married well, she could invite another to stay with her, and so the whole family would in due time be provided for.

It was not a nice way, perhaps, of getting over the difficulty ; but still, when people get very poor, and the choice lies between marrying a stranger and entering a strange family as governess, people generally choose, when practicable, to marry the strange man.

Grace had seen such cases, and had heard of many others, which set her wondering whether, in the event of her fortune making wings for itself, she could bring herself to contemplate a *mariage de convenance.*

No, she decided. She would rather go out as a governess or seek a situation as companion. Some people may say this showed she knew rather less of governesses and companions even than of marriage, but I think it was true for all that.

Spite of her money, her apparent worldliness, her determination to have no man for lover or husband who should not be able to bring as much in the way of fortune at least as she, Grace Moffat was really made of that sort of flesh and blood to whom the idea of being sold, or selling itself, is utterly and totally repugnant, impossible of achievement. She could, had reverses come, have earned her living as a governess, for she was very fond of children, loved them in the abstract, loved them practically; or she might have tried to humour the whims of sickness, and lighten the cares and ailments of age, for she had a high sense of duty, a keen comprehension of an often forgotten truth that when anything is given much has frequently to be returned, but she could not have married for a home.

There is not much praise perhaps due to her for this. Marriage and love, like many other things, are to a great extent matters of feeling. Her feeling concerning them was strong. For instance, when once she found Mr. Robert Somerford had been playing at fast and loose with her, not all the titles in England, not all the money in the Bank of Ireland, could have reconciled her to his suit.

It was quite on the cards she might make an insane match some day, and repent it to the last hour of her life; but at all events she would not make it with her eyes open.

For these and other reasons the notion of John Riley's sisters going out to India to establish themselves as he had done, to seek his fortune, did not recommend itself to her sentiments, but it did to her common sense. After all, there was nothing so exceptionally refined about the Misses Riley as to render the idea repugnant to them. Why, then, did they not, had they not gone? Grace could only solve the problem in one way. John did not wish them to go—poor John—dear old plain-featured John? why could he not have been content and liked her as she liked him? Why had he gone away and left his father in the hands of the Philistines? Of course she should write to Mrs. Hartley. What could Mrs. Hartley do, what would she say?

Altogether it was so astounding a thing to contemplate, even the possibility of Mr. Brady ousting out the Rileys

and ensconcing himself in the Woodbrook nest, that Grace's mind refused to accept it as a possibility. Nevertheless she could not help wondering whether, in the event of the Rileys leaving, the next tenant would paint the entrance gates and repair the lodge.

"If John were at home, I should ask him to have the trellis-work on the West Lodge nailed up," thought Grace; "but of course, as he is not, I dare not mention the matter to any one."

People who have plenty of money are able to attend to details which to people who have only plenty of worry seem maddeningly small.

The latter, under the pressure of great trouble, consider trifles as of no importance, never thinking that trifles to the world are as straws, showing which quarter the winds of fortune blow from.

Spite of these incongruities of thought, however, the very idea of Mr. Brady taking possession of Woodbrook seemed like a hideous nightmare. That he should step into the Castle Farm was bad enough, but that he should also annex Woodbrook appeared impossible.

Nevertheless Nettie had assured her such a change of owners was not merely possible, but probable; and if this were really the case, and Grace's common sense saw no reason to doubt the fact, steps ought immediately to be taken to avert such a calamity.

But how were they to be taken, and by whom? If, next day, Mrs. Hartley were put in possession of the facts, what would she do? what could she do if she would?

It was Nettie who had suggested Mrs. Hartley, but the result of Grace's musings tended towards consulting her father.

He was a man, and, spite of her anti-matrimonial views, Grace had more faith in the capabilities of men than of women; of late she and her father had been much more together than was hitherto the case; her cousin was gone, and neither Mr. Moffat nor his daughter strove to fill her place with another companion.

They were happier alone. People said Grace was growing like her father, and that as she got older she would feel as great a distaste for general society as he; but this was not quite true; Grace loved long quiet walks, but the company of her fellows had its charms for her as well. Still she and

her father had dove-tailed into companionship. Her enthusiasm had fitted itself somehow naturally into his indifference. She was content he should laugh at her. He was more than content perhaps to tolerate her impetuosity, her indiscriminate charity, her wide sympathy with, and ready inclination to help, the poor.

If study had taught him as little as it usually does most scholars of things likely to be useful in daily life, it had at least imbued him with toleration towards his own daughter.

It enabled him to draw inferences about her which a less educated man would have arrived at by means of intuition.

Had she been more selfish, less unsophisticated, would she have loved him so much, herself so little? He had but one trouble about her, she was a very lonely maiden. Before he went he would like to have seen her married.

To whom? That was the difficulty. After Robert Somerford's defection, he could not, looking around on the various men who aspired to his daughter's hand, look upon one of them with favour.

"Well," he reflected, "single happiness is better than double misery, nevertheless I could wish to have seen my Grace the wife of some honest gentleman ere this."

Honest gentlemen, however, are always a little shy about trying to win heiresses, and so father and daughter, having been thrown much together of late, had learned to understand each other better and love each other more.

For which reason Grace resolved to take Mr. Moffat into her confidence. If she told him she was not at liberty to name her informant, he would trouble her with no questions, and his daughter had an instinctive feeling that, if by any means Woodbrook could be preserved to the Rileys, he would find that means.

He had been willing to help her in the matter of the Scotts, and only failed to do so because it was a matter in which no help could be given.

He would be able perhaps to make some useful suggestions, at any rate she would talk the matter over with him.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHEN DOCTORS DIFFER.

Decided as to the course she should pursue, Grace quickened her steps, and proceeded at a more rapid pace along the broad, gravelled walk, where the branches of the trees and rare shrubs which abounded at Bayview drooped over the murmuring sea.

In the semi-darkness she could see her home; an oblong substantial house, with its windows opening on two sides to terraces commanding wide and beautiful views over land and water.

Some former owner of Bayview, possessed of that taste for landscape gardening which at one time must have been as distinguishing a trait of Irish character as it now appears to be of English, had lodged Bayview in a perfect bowery of all rare and exquisite shrubs; shrubs that, though they have become common enough since and easy enough of purchase, are still not so generally to be found planted in the grounds surrounding houses of moderate pretensions, owned by gentlemen of modest though sufficient income, as they should. Between the French windows were trained, on trellis-work against the wall, myrtles that grew luxuriantly out-of-doors, and were covered year after year with bud and flower. Peeping here and there through the dark green foliage, and laying their bright cheeks against the white myrtle blossoms, were roses, pink and red. Pyracantha, honeysuckles, magnolias, and a creeper with great leaves, the name of which I never knew, the like of which I have never seen elsewhere, filled up other spaces and covered the bed-room windows with a marvellous amount of varied greenery. A hedge of sweet-briar, along which passion-flowers trailed in wild profusion, growing as freely as briony and convolvulus elsewhere, divided the southern terrace and pleasure-grounds from the kitchen-gardens, whilst the western terrace terminated in a flight of stone steps, with heavy stone balustrades, leading on to the avenue.

Beyond the terrace by the lawns and shrubberies, the former studded with artistically-placed groups of trees and

evergreens, the latter a tangled mass of tangled surprises to visitors who found themselves one moment admiring the golden flowers of the common laburnum and the next pausing to look at a magnificent Italian broom; who could scarcely believe that the Portuguese laurel could ever bloom with such a lavish wealth of white cones as they beheld rising tier over tier above their heads; who rubbed their fingers gently up the stem of the velvety shumach and ate syringa leaves that resemble cucumbers in their flavour, and broke buds off the clustering bunches of yellow roses; while young ladies twined sprays of that exquisite little plant known to simple people by no long Latin name, but only as "the bridal wreath," or permitted long pendants of the lilac laburnum to float in the breeze with their curls.

A chapter would scarce suffice me to catalogue the names of the shrubs and trees for the possession of which Bayview was famous; but Grace knew them all by heart. She knew the dewy mornings and the fine evenings after rain, when the sweet-briar gave forth its sweetest fragrance. She knew where the earliest bouquets of lily of the valley were to be gathered, the sheltered nooks where grew primroses and violets were not hidden from her. From a child she had been acquainted with the haunt of the wood anemone, and the sunny spots where lady's fingers made soft cushions of yellow and brown and green; and when the little boys and girls, her tiny friends from Kingslough, came out to spend a day at Bayview, who could show them so well as she the exact bend in the shallow stream where "apple-pie" grew sweet and tall amongst reeds and "sagans," or that piece of undrained ground where the rushes stood thick enough to delight the hearts of those who had come trooping out to make swords and parasols and butterfly cages?

And scarcely a nook, or dell, or upland, or winding walk, or ripple of the stream over the stones but was associated somehow or another with John Riley. Here he had carried her over the stepping-stones when they seemed too wet and slippery for her childish feet; there he held her hand tight while she jumped over a little ravine. She could not help remembering the day when he climbed the pine-tree and shook the firs to obtain cones to fill her basket, which he subsequently carried home. She had dragged him out to bonfires in the fields, and insisted on his roasting potatoes for, and eating them afterwards with, her; which was not

a form of entertainment John Riley relished. She remembered the very hour, and day, and minute, when he put the strings of a tartan velvet bag, the possession whereof made her exceeding proud, round her neck, and called it her panier, and how she slapped his face, and how her father, coming up at the moment, was exceeding angry, and how John made all peace between them with a few pleasant words. They had gathered shells together, and collected sea-weeds, and made arbours of fir-branches, and paved them with cockle-shells. And now she was a child no longer, no longer a girl, quite a young woman, who but for her exceeding beauty would already have been called an old maid, and the pleasant days were over, and John, having made a mistake in loving Grace Moffat, was in India; and Grace Moffat in Ireland was thinking how, if she loved Bayview so much, John would endure the idea of losing Woodbrook, which was not merely a residence, but an estate, a place any nobleman might have liked to own and beautify!

Of late a word has become fashionable in leaders and novels which appears to me frequently used without just cause; its constant iteration at all events sounds unpleasant in my own ears.

Nevertheless, employed with caution, it is an expressive word, and I must therefore be excused when I say the most dependable sort of pity is that which is cumulative. I mean that in which one layer of compassion is added to another till a compact and dependable whole is erected upon a sufficient foundation.

This pity Grace Moffat now experienced for the Rileys. At first it had rather vexed her to think she should be called upon to sympathise in or interfere with the troubles of people who were so much less than nothing to her, that towards some members of the family at all events she felt almost antagonistic. But a little reflection, and perhaps the warning, sorrowful, sobbing of the waves softened her heart. She thought of Nettie, once so dear to her, who of her own act had alienated all old friends, who would have nothing now to do with old friends, let them beg never so hard for her intimacy. She thought of the Glendares and the Somerfords, whose liking for her had been transient as spring sunshine. She thought of Mrs. Hartley, who, long before, must, like a sensible woman, have formed fresh acquaintances, and taken them (and their English accent) more

cordially to her bosom than she had ever done any one of the inhabitants of Kingslough or its vicinity. She thought of Amos Scott, who would have none of her help unless it could be given in his own way. She thought of her pensioners, who, if she died the next day, would, spite of their Presbyterian and predestinarian ideas, say from the mere force of habit contracted by long intercourse with Roman Catholics, "God rest her; it's herself was a good lady!" and greet a charitable successor with, "God bless her; it's herself that's a kind lady!" and then she thought of the love she had once thought of comparatively little account—that of her father. She had him, she had her home, but what had John Riley?

He might have made friends, no doubt, but friends are no enduring possession. He might have formed a fresh attachment, but in India it was unlikely the object of that attachment would be a lady largely endowed with this world's goods. He might have won golden opinions, but something more than these is needful to make a man prosperous and happy.

He had his family, but supposing the members composing it were reduced to poverty, what should they profit him? At his father's death, Woodbrook, encumbered, beautiful Woodbrook, must come to him, if it were saved from Mr. Brady; but in either case, what a future presented itself! Woodbrook his, with its mortgages, and burdened by the maintenance of his mother and sisters; Woodbrook not his, and both parents and his sisters to provide for.

Poor John, whom she could remember light-hearted John, it was a hard lot to contemplate! Each generation had remained true to the traditions of the family, and made the Riley position worse. Would John make it worse, even if Mr. Brady did not? Would he marry some girl without a shilling, and perpetuate the poverty that had for generations been as certain an inheritance as Woodbrook?

It all seemed very dark to Grace, very dark and pitiful. Even to those who have tasted of its bitterness, the draught of misfortune does not appear so unendurable a potion to swallow as to those who have had nothing but sweets presented to them.

Grace dreaded poverty, the rich generally do, and as she thought of her own fair home, a great pity for John Riley, a pity different from anything she had ever previously felt for any one, welled up in her heart. It seemed only like yester-

day that she had given him his dismissal, and never an honester suitor had asked her hand since then.

She would go straight to her father and tell him what she had heard, and with this intention Grace passed into the house through one of the windows opening on to the terrace.

The room she entered was yet unlighted, and she was about to ring for candles, when, recollecting that she still wore her shawl and bonnet, she crossed the apartment with the intention of changing her dress before summoning a servant.

Though there was nothing unusual in the fact of her rambling about the grounds after dusk, on the present occasion the feeling that she had something to conceal induced her to seek concealment; and she was hastening to her dressing-room, when in the hall the cook, with white, startled face, confronted her,—

"We've been looking for you everywhere, Miss Grace. The master——"

Grace laid her hand on the back of a chair to steady herself.

"What is the matter?" she asked; "what has happened? where is my father?"

"He is in his own room, Miss Grace, and the doctors with him. He was took——"

But Grace waited to hear no more, she ran up the staircase, and along the corridor to a room at the extreme end, the door of which stood open.

She could hear a man speaking in a voice hushed yet excited, evidently insisting upon some course antagonistic to his auditor, and as she paused for one second in her progress, that auditor replied in cool, clear tones,—

"We will wait till Miss Moffat comes; she shall decide between us."

"But I tell you I must do it. Would you have me see the man die before my eyes?"

"I tell you it shall not be done," the other answered, adding immediately, "Here is Miss Moffat."

Grace did not greet either of them; she went straight over to the bed where lay her father, apparently lifeless.

His head rested on the pillow, his grey hair fell tangled about his face, his eyes were closed, his arms hung powerless beside his body, and his hands, white, wan, and nerveless, were as the hands of a corpse.

She had courage, there was no question about that; she had received the most fearful shock a human being can sustain, and yet she never wept, shrieked, nor exclaimed. Had she been alone with him, there is little doubt she would have flung herself beside the bed and sobbed and cried like any other woman; but before the strangers present, strangers at the moment, though they were only Doctor Girvan and Mr. Hanlon, and some of the servants, she could not lay bare her heart; and involuntarily all in the room were silenced for the moment by her silence, calmed by her calmness.

"What is it?" she asked, speaking to Doctor Girvan, but including Mr. Hanlon in her question by a look.

"Apoplexy," said the Doctor unhesitatingly.

"It is no such thing," declared Mr. Hanlon stoutly.

"And he should be bled instantly," continued Dr. Girvan, ignoring his opponent's remark, and fingering his lancet lovingly.

"Miss Moffat, so certainly as your father is bled he is a dead man," exclaimed Mr. Hanlon earnestly. "If Dr. Girvan persists in bleeding, I must decline to be associated with him in the treatment of the case."

"And if I don't bleed him," said Dr. Girvan, "there will be no case to treat."

Grace looked at the motionless figure, then at the old doctor trembling with anger, striving to repress the fury he felt it would be unseemly to show, and again at the handsome confident face of the younger man.

She had known Dr. Girvan since she had known anything; he was their regular attendant; in all her childish ailments he had given her kind words and smiles, and sent her detestable medicines; when in her later years she caught cold and was troubled with cough, sore throat, or any other malady, he and none other had treated her. For well-nigh half a century he had cured or killed the gentry of Kingslough and its neighbourhood, and there was comfort in that reflection. To be sure he knew nothing, and professed to know nothing, of new-fangled ways; but then the fashion of living and dying is one which knows little alteration. Being born, being buried, are matters susceptible of so little change that Grace might well be excused if in her extremity she fastened her gaze more confidently on the old light than on the new. Mr. Hanlon

might be very clever, but after all he could not have Dr. Girvan's experience.

Encouraged by her manifest leaning to his view of the case, the latter said eagerly,—

"Each instant is precious, Miss Grace. Had I alone been summoned, I should have let blood the moment I came."

"As I objected to your doing so, our patient has still a chance of living," observed Mr. Hanlon, without the least sign of excitement; "but now, if Miss Moffat wishes, I will at once retire from the room and the case."

"No—no, pray stay!" she entreated.

"I cannot remain unless I am allowed to pursue my own course of treatment," said Doctor Girvan.

"I said we would leave it for Miss Moffat to decide," remarked Mr. Hanlon, with exasperating civility, but with an anxious look in his face nevertheless. "Doctor Girvan says this attack is apoplectic, and should be treated by bleeding. I say it is not apoplectic, and that bleeding may be a fatal error."

"I tell you I have seen a score of cases of apoplectic seizures for one that can have come across you," said Doctor Girvan, advancing to the patient. "And I have attended Mr. Moffat and Mr. Moffat's family——"

"Let his daughter speak," interrupted Mr. Hanlon, speaking sternly and peremptorily. "Miss Moffat, the decision rests with you."

"It is cruel of you to force such a responsibility upon me," said Grace hoarsely. "You understand medicine, I do not; save him," she added, pointing towards her father, "that is all I can tell you."

"But, Miss Moffat," began Mr. Hanlon.

"Ah! stand back, can't you?" exclaimed Doctor Girvan brusquely; "we're wasting precious time in child's talk. And indeed you are right, Miss Grace, and it was cruel to try to lay such a burden on you; but never mind, I'll take all the responsibility upon myself. Now if you'll just walk out of the room for a minute or two——"

"A moment," interrupted Mr. Hanlon. "Miss Moffat, what I am doing may be unprofessional. Nevertheless I remonstrate against Doctor Girvan's proposed course of treatment, and implore you not to countenance it."

"To hear you, anybody might think I was not ten years of age," remarked the Doctor.

"Miss Moffat, speak for mercy's sake!" implored Mr. Hanlon; "I pledge my reputation this is no apoplectic fit."

"As if you should know!" muttered Doctor Girvan contemptuously.

"Though I was sent for, I feel I am an intruder here," continued Mr. Hanlon, unheeding the interruption.

"That is true at any rate. Indeed and you are," commented Doctor Girvan.

"But I cannot—being here—see a man bled to death without entering my protest against such a proceeding."

"Will you be quiet?" requested Doctor Girvan; "can't you see you are wringing his daughter's heart?"

"Miss Moffat, will you trust your father to me?" asked Mr. Hanlon.

"Sure the doctor must know best," whispered a housemaid, on whom the new comer's youth and good looks had made no impression.

"Indeed, and Miss Grace," ventured the butler, who had always been accustomed to volunteer his advice and opinions, as is the not unpleasing habit of all Irish servants, from the highest to the lowest, the highest perhaps the most frequently. "Indeed, an' Miss Grace, I think if the masther himself could speak, which send he may soon, he would say, lave it to the docthor, and let him bleed me freely,"

"Miss Moffat, won't you speak?" said Mr. Hanlon, glancing at the two last speakers looks that went through them, so they subsequently averred, like flashes of lightning.

"We have lost too much time already," said Dr. Girvan, with an air of busy importance, for he saw Grace, though divided, felt inclined to walk in the old footsteps.

"Mr. Hanlon," she said, "I do not trust you less because I trust Doctor Girvan more;" then she stooped and kissed brow, and lip, and cheek of the man lying there motionless, and after saying, "Doctor, you would not deceive me, you will save my father," left the room.

Mr. Hanlon followed her. She did not go downstairs, but stood in the corridor, leaning against the wall. He went into one of the rooms close at hand, and fetched her a chair, then he retreated a few steps, and remained with head bent and hands plunged in his pockets, looking gloomily at the pattern of the carpet.

There was silence for a minute, which he broke by saying,—

"I can do nothing more here, so I will bid you good-night, Miss Moffat. May I send any of the servants up to you?"

She put out her hand, which he took and held. "Do not go; oh, pray, pray stay!"

"But I assure you——"

"Never mind assuring me; stay."

"Doctor Girvan does not wish it."

"I wish it."

It was very hard to hold out, but still Mr. Hanlon made a feint of doing so.

"In my private capacity, Miss Moffat, I would do anything on earth to oblige you, but in my professional——"

"Forget your professional pride for a little while," she entreated. "You told me to decide; and how could I decide otherwise, when we had known him so long, when my father trusted him so much?"

"I do not see how you could."

"Then you will stay?"

"If I stay, will you do something for me in return?"

"Tell me what it is?"

"Send to Kilcurragh for Doctor Murney, and to Glenwellan for Doctor Connelley; send without a moment's delay."

"You think he is in such danger?"

He turned his face away; he could not bear she should see the answer he knew was written there.

"Do as you like!" she said feebly. "I leave it all to you. I—I must go to him now," and she rose and walked a step or two towards the room where her father lay, then paused, wavered, and would have fallen, but that Mr. Hanlon, anticipating the result, caught her in his arms.

He carried her into the room whence he had brought the chair, and, laying her on a sofa, left her, without even making an effort to restore her to consciousness, but, hastening downstairs, found the cook, whom he sent to her mistress, saying,—

"She has fainted, but don't try to bring her to. I shall see her again in a few minutes."

"Which are the best pair of horses you have in the stables, Mick?" he asked, addressing the groom, who was in the kitchen, waiting to hear if he was likely to be wanted.

"How is the masther, yer honour?"

"Badly enough, and likely to be worse," was the answer; "but about the horses?"

"Miss Grace's mare is the fastest, but the bay the masther, preserve him, bought last month, has a power of outcome in him."

"Who is there here you can trust to take one of them to Glenwellan with a note for Doctor Connelley?"

"Sure I can ride there myself."

"No, I want you to go to Kilcurragh and bring back Doctor Murney. You had best take the tax-cart."

"Save us, Doctor; is he that bad?"

"Yes, quite as bad as that," Mr. Hanlon answered. "Some of you help Mick with the harness. I will have the notes ready by the time you are."

Mightily astonished was the mare at having a saddle slipped on her at that time of night; pettishly she champed the bit and struck her off forefoot against the rough pavement of the yard, whilst Mick tightened her girths by the simple expedient of planting his knee in her stomach, pulling at the same time buckles and straps as far home as he could get them.

"Ride like the devil, Jerry," were Mick's parting instructions, and, nothing loth to follow such a congenial example, Jerry, after the first mile and a half, which he took "modtherately," for fear of breaking the mare's wind, did the rest of the distance at hard gallop.

"And the beauty niver turned a hair," said Jerry, when reciting subsequently the marvels of that wild ride. Perhaps if the mare's story told her equine companions could have been heard, her account of the state of affairs would have differed slightly from that of her rider.

As for the bay, never before had that animal's powers of outcome been so severely tested. Up hill and down dale it was all one to Mick. With a whoop and a "now lad" he lifted him into a stretching canter up the inclines, with a tight rein and a cut of the whip he warned him to take no false step whilst spinning down declivities steep enough to appal the understandings of ordinary people.

Horses and men did their best, as Irish horses and Irish men will in moments of excitement and time of need, and that best was, as is ever the case in that land of strange contrasts, something super-excellent; but it was all labour in vain.

Had they flown on the wind, had the horses been birds, had they been able to cleave the air with wings, the help they brought must still have proved too late.

With the first drop of blood, the chances of life began to flutter; when the last was drawn, and Dr. Girvan heaved a sigh of satisfaction, hope, so far as this world was concerned, had fled for Mr. Moffat.

"He will do now," said Dr. Girvan, complacently addressing Mr. Hanlon.

But that gentleman shook his head,—

"We shall see," he answered: and they did see.

CHAPTER XXII.

NO CHANGE.

When Grace recovered consciousness, she looked around the room, and her eyes rested with an expression of mute appeal on Dr. Girvan, who stood near.

"All is going on well," he answered. With a murmured thanksgiving she laid her head back against the sofa pillows, when her glance chanced to fall on Mr. Hanlon.

"You do not think all is well?" she said.

"I have not seen the patient," he replied. "He is, of course, solely in Dr. Girvan's hands until the physicians for whom you have sent arrive."

"You have sent for further advice, Miss Grace?" remarked Dr. Girvan inquiringly. "Could you not trust me?"

"I can trust you," she answered; "but he is my father. I must go to him now," and without asking another question she went.

"This is your doing," said Dr. Girvan to Mr. Hanlon as the door of the sick chamber closed behind her.

"Don't let us quarrel, Doctor," replied the younger man sadly, and not without a certain dignity. "Before very long, I am afraid you will find something is *your* doing, which you will regret till the last hour of your life."

"Do you think, sir, I do not understand my business?"

"I think you have misunderstood this case. Mr. Moffat is as good as a dead man, and you have killed him."

After delivering himself of which pleasant utterance, Mr.

Hanlon walked out of the room, down the stairs, and out into the night.

He did not go home; not a thought of deserting Grace Moffat in her extremity occurred to this man, who if he was foolish was chivalrous. He passed through the still unlighted apartments, and made his way on to the terrace. There he paced up and down, inhaling the fragrance of the flowers and shrubs; listening to the wind rustling among the trees, and the murmur of the sea washing in upon the shore; thinking of the man stricken so suddenly; thinking of the woman so grand in her sorrow, so quiet in her grief, and of something else also which if now told would reveal whatever plot this poor story holds.

There are times when the mind seems a mere mirror, when it can only receive the impression of that immediately presented before it. In all times of sudden and agonized trouble, I think this is the case. When a fearful accident occurs, it is to the latest telegram we all instinctively direct our eyes, whether the accident concerns us personally or not; and in like manner when some calamity comes to pass, which involves us and those dear to us, we dwell on the result, never troubling ourselves to inquire into details, until we have recovered from the effect of the first swift and stunning blow.

It was thus with Grace Moffat at all events. She did not know, she did not ask to know, how the seizure occurred. She had never been with sickness, was utterly ignorant of the fact that a woman ought to know almost as much of illness as a doctor.

Afterwards she understood that when the butler, supposing his master had long left the dining-room, entered that apartment he found Mr. Moffat lying face downwards on the floor; that he, having despatched "Jamesey"—an old boy who loafed about the kitchen and had no settled position or employment, unless it might be to bear the blame of all faults committed, and perform all work left undone by every one else—for the doctor, the lad rushing down the road was encountered by two retainers of the house of Moffat, who, hearing the news, started off, one with Jamesey to Dr. Girvan, the other by himself to Mr. Hanlon. There were factions at Bayview, as in every other establishment in Ireland; some of the servants inclining to old ways and people including Dr. Girvan, and others leaning to the

new school of which in Kingslough Mr. Hanlon was the exponent.

There were those in the town who could not have died happily had the young surgeon tried to cure them ; there were others who would scarcely have accepted life at the hands of Dr. Girvan : and thus it came to pass that both men were sent for, and both arrived within a few minutes of each other.

Then commenced the disagreement terminated by Grace.

"I am no better than a coward," thought Mr. Hanlon, as he walked up and down through the night. "Why did I ever leave the matter for him to decide? When he is gone she will continually be reproaching herself. I ought to have insisted on sending for Murney at once ; I ought to have kept that doting idiot off his prey by force if necessary."

At that moment a hand was laid on his arm. It belonged to Grace, who had come so softly along the terrace that he failed to hear her footsteps. "Mr. Hanlon," she began.

"Yes, Miss Moffat?"

"I want you to tell me the truth," she said. "Never mind medical etiquette. Forget you are a doctor, that I am *his* daughter ; speak to me as you might to a stranger. What do you think of him?"

"I think he is in the hands of God," answered Mr. Hanlon. The demagogues of those days had one advantage over the demagogues of this ; they did acknowledge a power higher than themselves, and were occasionally awed by the remembrance of its existence.

"But what can man do?" she asked, her sweet voice shrill with the anguish of her soul.

"We shall know when the other doctors come."

She understood he had no hope ; and she stood for a moment silent, listening all unconsciously to the sobbing of the sea, to the sighing of the night wind through the trees, to the voices of silence that keep whispering and ever muttering through the darkness.

Already the lonely, awful journey seemed begun ; over the waters something blacker than night hovered. The mighty angel with the slow wings brooded over the place. The scent of the flowers appeared to her heavy and sickly, the slight breeze as it touched her cheek failed to refresh her.

"Let us go in," she said, "the darkness frightens me," and she drew him into the drawing-room.

"Come upstairs," she pleaded. "See if something cannot be done. Come and look at him. Forget you are a doctor; think of yourself only as a friend. Don't stand upon your dignity. Help me, I am so lonely. He is all I have in the world."

"Miss Moffat, if by dying this night I could save your father, I would do it. These are not idle words. There is no one who would miss me much after the first. Some one would take up my work where I laid it down and finish it."

And there he suddenly stopped, and she instinctively withdrew her hand; and then with the impulse of a higher and nobler womanhood, which raised Grace on a loftier pedestal than women of her age generally occupy, she laid it again on his arm and said,—

"Do not talk in that way; I cannot bear to hear such words from you."

"Why not?" he asked.

"Because you have your life to live," she answered simply, "and it is not good to begin a long journey with a weary heart."

A prophetic sentence, one which both recalled when the crisis of his existence arrived.

Side by side they ascended the staircase, and stepped lightly along the corridor, and entered the room where Mr. Moffat lay.

Already Dr. Girvan's confidence in the correctness of his diagnosis was shaken. There was something in the look of the man who lay there, still insensible, which he had never seen in the face of one who came back from the borders of the Valley of the Shadow. According to his anticipations, the patient should already have been exhibiting some sign of recovery, some token, however slight, of returning animation; but there was no change as yet, none, unless it might be that the colour was of a more leaden pallor, that the hand he touched lay more like that of a dead man, that it became difficult to hear the breath, that in a word no symptom he had calculated upon showed itself, that on the contrary all the symptoms were unlike those he had mentally predicted must appear.

Now, as Dr. Girvan himself would have said, he had not lived his life for nothing; old-fashioned he could fairly be

called, bigoted might be; ignorant of the latest discoveries, behind the age in many things he undoubtedly was, but by no means a fool in his profession. He did not know what was the matter with Mr. Moffat, but he was almost certain now that he had mistaken his ailment, and if so——"

"What do you think of him?" he whispered to Mr. Hanlon, after another doubtful look at his patient.

Mr. Hanlon shook his head.

"Can you think of anything?" A clammy perspiration was standlng on his forehead and his hands were shaking with nervous dread as he asked the question.

"The others may. As things are I should be afraid to try."

"Don't be afraid, man. If there is anything can be done let us try it. I will take the blame if blame there be. Only don't let us see him die before our eyes without lifting a hand to save him."

"What are you talking about?" Grace asked at this juncture, crossing to where they stood.

"We are consulting, Miss Moffat," answered Mr. Hanlon; then, turning to Dr. Girvan, he said, "I should try a stimulant."

"A stimulant in apoplexy!" exclaimed the older man in an accent of horror.

"It is not apoplexy, and if it were, in this case, I should try it still."

"I do not know what to say I am sure," remarked Dr. Girvan. But Mr. Hanlon cut short the discussion by himself going for what he wanted, and administering it to their patient.

After a short while a little tremor could be observed, and a slight decrease in the ghastly whiteness of the sick man's face.

"That has done him good," said Dr. Girvan in a tone of relief. "What should you think of trying a little more?"

"If you like," answered Mr. Hanlon; then added, "Now we will let him rest till Murney and Connelley come."

And they sat down; Dr. Girvan close beside the bed, Mr. Hanlon beside one of the windows looking towards the east, where the first streaks of dawn were already appearing.

Grace came to him as he sat there. "What do you think of my father now?" she asked, and he saw that her large eyes were heavy with the weight of unshed tears.

"I can only repeat that he is in the hands of God,"

answered Mr. Hanlon, rising and offering her his seat. "Man could tell you no more than that, till some change occur for better or for worse."

She took his chair, and drawing another to the window, Mr. Hanlon seated himself near her, and whilst both their eyes involuntarily sought the east their thoughts wandered silently and sadly on their separate ways.

"They are here!" Grace at length exclaimed. Her strained ear had been the first to catch the sound of wheels. That beauty the mare was not back before the horse with the "power of outcome in him;" but ere another half-hour, Dr. Connelley, who had ridden Mr. Moffat's latest purchase, leaving Jerry to follow with his own hack, was also in the house.

"You had better go down to him," said Mr. Hanlon to Dr. Girvan; he did not wish to influence Dr. Murney's opinion by any statement of his own: and as the old man left the room he added, speaking to Grace,—

"I think you had better not stay here. I will come to you presently."

"And tell me exactly what they say?"

He hesitated for a moment, then answered, "Yes, Miss Moffat, I promise."

Meanwhile, Dr. Murney was ascending the staircase. In Kilcurragh, a large and important town, he held high rank in his profession. Had his lot been cast in Dublin, he might have come to more honour; but he had been a very successful man, and made money enough to enable him to keep pace with the times, to visit London and Paris and "rub," as he said, "the provincial rust off his mind," and to enable him to entertain men great in science, surgery, and medicine, who from time to time crossed the Channel, and took Kilcurragh *en route* from Dublin to Donegal and the Giant's Causeway.

Dr. Girvan and he had often before met in consultation, and Mr. Hanlon also was not quite a stranger to him. His opinions at all events were not; but whilst he detested them, he was obliged to confess the young man had brains, and might have done well would he only have stuck to physic and left politics alone.

Mr. Moffat was known to him as a matter of course; and whilst he walked along the corridor rubbing his hands, for the night breeze and the sea air had conjointly proved chilly,

he kept up a series of running sentences, "Sad, sad, very sad; dear, dear, and a man no older than myself; a man who took care of himself also; temperate in his habits, careful in his diet, really these sudden attacks seem to set all our rules at nought. Had I been asked to name the last person I knew likely to be attacked by apoplectic seizure, I should have named my valued friend Moffat."

From which it will be seen that Dr. Girvan had not summoned up sufficient courage to disabuse the mind of his colleague of the impression conveyed to it by Mick.

The wretched man still hoped against hope that he had not been mistaken, and he mentally prayed, as, probably, he had never prayed before for anything, that Dr. Murney would confirm his first opinion. If he did, Dr. Girvan, in his extremity, felt as if he himself could die happily the next moment.

Dr. Murney entered the room silently, shook hands with Mr. Hanlon, walked over to the bed, looked at Mr. Moffat, felt his pulse; then, stepping across the apartment, he took a candle from a little table on which lights had been placed, and returning to the bedside, leant over the patient and studied his appearance attentively.

With a gloomy face Mr. Hanlon watched these proceedings, holding his breath in a very agony of suspense; Dr. Girvan watched them too.

"Here!" said the new-comer at length, thrusting the candle towards Mr. Hanlon, who took it as indicated; then Dr. Murney bared the sick man's breast, and laid his ear against his heart.

After that he carefully, tenderly almost, replaced the bedclothes, and stood silent for a moment, waiting, apparently, for the others to speak; but neither of them uttering a syllable, he said,—"This is not apoplexy."

"Lord, forgive me," murmured Dr. Girvan; and he sat down on the nearest chair, covering his face with his hands.

"What can be done now?" asked Mr. Hanlon, his voice hoarse with emotion he was trying to master.

"Nothing," replied Dr. Murney, and he walked to the window and looked out, and came back again to where Dr. Girvan sat.

"Don't take on so," he said, speaking kindly to the old man, and laying a compassionate hand on his shoulder. "If a mistake has been made, better men than any of us have

made mistakes before now. I am sure you and Mr. Hanlon have acted in this matter to the very best of your judgment."

Mr. Hanlon never opened his lips; Kingslough had not appreciated him, and Dr. Girvan, from the first, was his enemy, but he could not remember that now. In this hour of bitter humiliation, of maddening remorse, he felt he should have been less than human to add to the old man's self-reproach by recalling how persistently he had refused to listen to his remonstrances, how obstinately he had insisted on taking his own course.

No; if there were blame to be borne, they might bear it together. All the explanations on earth could not undo the past, could not mend the future.

But Dr. Girvan, whilst touched by his generosity, was labouring under an agony of repentance which refused to keep silence.

"Why don't you speak?" he said, lifting his haggard face and looking at Mr. Hanlon. "Why don't you tell him how the thing was?"

"I have nothing to tell," answered Mr. Hanlon. "If, as Dr. Murney says, a mistake was made, it is too late to undo it now. I know I did my best in the case, and I am sure you did yours. I don't think there is anything more to be said in the matter."

"Doctor, it was me." No form of expression, let it have been more grammatically accurate than the speaker ever conceived, could have gone so straight home to the hearts of his listeners as that containing those four words,—"Doctor, it was me." "If the man dies the blame lies at my door. He"—pointing to Mr. Hanlon—"told me how it would be, and I took no heed; I hadn't a doubt in my own mind. I believed I was doing right, and I did wrong, and now I wish I was lying there in his stead. I do," and he broke down and cried like a child.

"I think you said Connelley had been sent for also?" remarked Dr. Murney after standing silent for a moment.

"Yes, I sent for him in case you should not be at home," answered Mr. Hanlon. "He will be here directly, I should think."

"I am glad he is likely to come," said the other; "he may be able to make some suggestion. Meanwhile, Dr. Girvan and I will go downstairs and have a little talk

together." And taking the old man's arm he led him towards the door.

Then Dr. Girvan turned,—

"Mind," he almost sobbed, "I am to tell this to her myself; I don't want anybody to speak about it but me. Ah, Grace, little I thought the hour I helped to bring you into the world, that I would one day help to break your heart."

"She need never know," exclaimed Mr. Hanlon eagerly.

"Know sure you told her yourself. Didn't you say, standing where you are now, you wouldn't see a man bled to death?"

"I did, and more shame for me to have spoken such words before his daughter; but we can surely soften it to her, she need not be told exactly how the case stands."

"She shall be told the truth; maybe then she'll forgive me some time, though I can never forgive myself."

"Well, you needn't tell her now at any rate," interrupted Doctor Murney; "come with me. There's many a mistake of this sort made that is never found out either by doctors themselves or the friends of those they have been attending."

"A pleasant confession," thought Mr. Hanlon as he once again seated himself by the window and resumed his watch for dawn.

Slowly the streaks of light became broader, day gently pushed aside the curtains of night from the sea, darkness lifted itself gradually, the clouds become suffused with crimson, then the sun appeared above the horizon, and once again the ever-recurring miracle of a new day had been wrought upon the earth.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LEFT ALL ALONE.

Between them, Drs. Murney and Connelley devised some plan of treatment designed to comfort Dr. Girvan, to provide the inmates of Bayview with an ideal occupation, and to impress Grace with the conviction that nothing which could be done to save her father was being left undone.

True to his determination, Dr. Girvan, spite of all entreaties to the contrary, broke the news of Mr. Moffat's

danger to his daughter, accusing himself, at the same time, with having been the cause of that danger.

"Ye trusted me," he said, in that homely Irish accent which is never so sweet as when the speaker is in trouble and breathes a pathetic tone with every word,—"Ye trusted me, and this is how I've recompensed ye ; and all because of my own hatred—God forgive me!—and my own conceit. Had it been Dr. Murney or Connelley that said I was wrong, I'd have listened to either of them ; but as it is, my heart is breaking to think about you and him."

Into the old, honest face, puckered with emotion, into the eyes that had looked at her with a kindly light in them so often, Grace gazed for a minute. She was not so besotted with her own grief that she failed to see the bitterer grief of another, that she could note unmoved the anguish of repentance that had rendered this old man who made his tremulous confession almost beside himself with remorse ; and though tears lay too high for her to trust herself to answer him verbally, she took his hand in both of hers, with a pitying gesture, more eloquent than any form of speech.

Had Doctor Girvan been the most consummate diplomatist, instead of an honest, well-meaning, behind-the-age old man, he could not have hit on a plan better calculated to retain Grace's kindly feeling than that of a free and open confession.

After all, it is never what a person tells of himself, but what others say of him, that damages him materially. The frank plea of guilty takes the worst of the sting out of many a social as well as legal crime.

It may not be the highest nature which is ready to confess to man, but it is nevertheless the sort of nature man likes best ; and whereas, had Dr. Girvan failed to take the whole of the blame on his own shoulders, she would have retained an exceeding bitter remembrance of his determined rejection of Mr. Hanlon's opinion, she never, as matters now stood, thought in the future of her father's life sacrificed as it was to old tradition, without at the same time recalling the picture of an aged man's anguished face while he in the same breath entreated her forgiveness and blamed himself for having caused her such misery.

Further, Drs. Murney and Connelley, shocked at so open a display of professional insufficiency, lack of reticence, and disregard of medical etiquette, deeming it best to make out

as good a case for their fellow-practitioner as his imbecile and indiscreet revelations left possible, took immediate opportunity to efface as far as might be the impression such a direful abuse of common discretion was calculated to produce.

Between them they succeeded in sketching and filling in a very creditable series of facts founded on fiction; that is to say, the general conclusion at which they arrived was right, though the premises on which those conclusions were founded were wrong.

The case, they assured her, was a most obscure one. How far Dr. Girvan had been right in his course of treatment they could not tell, owing to the length of time which elapsed between Mr. Moffat's attack and their own arrival; but there was no doubt he had medical precedent of the highest authority for all he did, and if he erred, it was from no lack of skill or prudence, but simply because nature had chosen to clothe the complaint in a dress similar to that worn by a totally distinct disease; Mr. Hanlon's diagnosis of the case might not really have been one whit more correct than Dr. Girvan's; and finally they assured Miss Moffat that everything which could be done had been done, and should be done. "If skill and attention can save him," said Dr. Murney "he will be spared to you." And they left Grace, thinking they had glossed over the little error in judgment very neatly.

Mr. Hanlon lingered behind them for a moment. He had all a young man's enthusiasm for truth being always presented as a nude figure, and his public experiences of stating unpleasant facts without the slightest atom of clothing veiling their deformity tended undoubtedly to encourage this outspoken frankness on disagreeable topics.

For his life he could not see what good purpose the doctors proposed to effect by mystifying Miss Moffat as to her father's state.

"They are raising false hopes," he thought, and so waited to hear what remark Grace might have to make.

Doctor Murney's last words, which Dr. Connelley ratified with an approving smile, had been, "If skill and attention can save him, he will be spared to you.

"And what do you say, Mr. Hanlon?" she asked.

"You have heard what Dr. Murney's opinion is," he answered.

"Yes, and I think I know what it is worth. The promise contained in his words will be kept to the ear and broken to the heart. Be frank with me, Mr. Hanlon; it is so, is it not?"

"I do not like to answer you," he said.

"But what is the use of deceiving me?" she asked.

"None," was his answer.

"You believe, then, there is no hope?"

"I believe nothing can save him," he said slowly. "But we will all do our best, you may be sure of that, Miss Moffat."

"Thank you," she answered. The words were nothing, but the tone in which she spoke them went straight to the surgeon's heart.

"I wish that idiot Girvan had been dead and buried rather than he should have meddled in the case," thought the surgeon. "And yet perhaps it is as well. A few years might have been added to this man's life, but how could he have found enjoyment in them, with the dread of THIS dogging his path? Better as it is," decided Mr. Hanlon philosophically. Like many other social reformers, his ideas about the value of life were extremely lax. The nation, the race, the world, posterity, these were the objects he desired to benefit.

What did a few or many lives matter, providing the grand result were obtained? What mattered it whether thousands died brokenhearted, if by the travail of their souls millions yet unborn tasted the delights of perfect equality, of (this was a telling platform phrase, perhaps because there is no country—unless, indeed, it may be Scotland, where there is less uncovering, except amongst the beggars, than in Ireland)—"doffing their hats to no man."

Mr. Hanlon said, and doubtless thought he spoke the truth, he would cheerfully lay down his life to emancipate Ireland.

There is a considerable difference, however, between abstract propositions and actual practice. When the time came that Mr. Hanlon's chances of existence seemed jeopardized, he proved himself as solicitous to extend his days as the veriest aristocrat might have been.

Nevertheless his theories on the subject being that as a man had to die some time, it did not much matter when he died, he began after a time to consider that perhaps it was quite as well Mr. Moffat should not recover.

He had been a negative quantity ever since his arrival in

Ireland. He had not done any harm, but he had not done any good. He had occupied the place where a better man might stand, or which no man might advantageously fail to occupy.

A woman with money, a willing heart, an open hand, was of ten times more use in her generation than a man. Perhaps he had in his mind the old saying, "When women reign—men rule."

At any rate, he thought he could find a use for much of Miss Moffat's income, not a use so far as he personally was concerned; he was not mercenary; good things he desired, but those it was beyond the power of gold to purchase. No, he would relieve the poor, he would advance the cause, he would drive the wedge destined to split up "the dynasty of oppression," and Grace's money would help him to these ends.

She could not well now refuse to recognise him as a friend. His knowledge of society was so slight, he had not the faintest idea two such alien barks as his and hers might come nigh together, and have for a few hours a common interest and then part, "like a dream on the wide deep." He railed against society; but of its ideas, customs, habits of thought, modes of action, he was ignorant as a child.

Already he had sketched out a course of action for Grace and himself—arranged the pecuniary part she was to play in the drama, and the various modes in which her money would enable him better to enact the character he had elected to fill.

His interest, professionally, in Mr. Moffat had departed. He could do nothing for him—no one could do anything for him. He had even in the course of his limited experience beheld nature achieve triumphs of medical skill which set science and all previous calculations utterly at nought, but his conviction was, that in this case nature meant to let matters take their course.

"She has been meddled with and thwarted," he considered: "but for Dr. Girvan perhaps she might have had a chance, at all events we should have been left time in which to try our treatment. As matters are he is doomed. A few hours more and the master of Bayview will be wiser than the wisest man on earth. He will know more than any of us."

Which really might be considered an almost reluctant admission on the part of Mr. Hanlon's mind, not because his theology was defective, but because his self-conceit was so

great, it actually touched his vanity to think a man like Mr. Moffat would know more in the next world than he knew in this.

"I have done all I could in the matter, that is certain," he said as a finish to his reflections ; and Grace being in the sick-room, he went down-stairs to join Drs. Murney and Connelley at breakfast.

Let death be ever so active in one place, life will be equally active in another, and the fact that the master of the house could never again welcome a guest nor issue a command did not in the smallest degree affect the appetites of the men who had come so far to strive and save him.

Dr. Girvan, indeed, saying it would choke him to "take bite or sup," had hurried home to secure a few hours' quiet before the business of the day began ; but the night air and the long drive and ride, and the sharp morning air which blew crisp and cold over Bayview, sharpened the relish with which the two strange doctors looked on the well-laden table that gladdened their eyes when they entered the dining-room after their interview with Grace.

As for Mr. Hanlon, he was young ; he dined early ; he never supped; he did not often treat himself to the luxury of sitting up all night—in a word, breakfast was still breakfast to him, let who could not help it die, let who would live.

"A most capital cut of beef!" remarked Dr. Murney, returning from the sideboard with his plate replenished for the third time ; Connelley, let me persuade you."

"Remember I am not a sea-bird like you, and fish fresh out of the water is a treat to me. Ah ! poor Moffat, how particular he used to be about the fish that came to his table!"

And the speaker shook his head and helped himself to another slice of broiled salmon.

"That was a sad mistake of Girvan's!" said Dr. Murney, looking round the room, to make sure the respectable servant who had been told they "would see to themselves" was nowhere within earshot.

"Never kept himself up with the times," explained Dr. Connelley.

"But, gentlemen," interrupted Mr. Hanlon, "if nature is always changing her diseases with the times, how is a doctor to keep himself posted up with regard to her latest ailment ?"

"Nature does not change. Her diseases may be modified or extended by circumstances," said Dr. Murney, "but her

laws are immutable. Science, however, finds out that diseases once classed under the same head may be separated; may be—must be; and a medical man ought to keep himself abreast of science. For instance, no doubt hundreds and thousands of persons suffering like Mr. Moffat have been treated up to quite recent times for apoplexy, and died under that treatment."

"Pleasant!" ejaculated Mr. Hanlon.

"Inevitable," said Dr. Connelley, with philosophical composure. And after all he was right; the knowledge of those days would be deemed ignorance now.

"I will drive over to-morrow," remarked Dr. Murney, who, having finished his breakfast, was drawing on his gloves preparatory to that return journey which was to be made once again in Mr. Moffat's tax-cart, with one of Mr. Moffat's horses. "Although indeed——" the pause was as significant as the words.

"And I will come too, if I can," added Dr. Connelley; "but I am afraid—" once again an ellipsis, which Mr. Hanlon filled up at his discretion.

"I suppose you will watch the case?" suggested Dr. Murney.

"With Girvan? yes. He and I had a quarrel last night, but I will not desert the poor old fellow now."

"Ah, well, you need not fear having to wait long for the end," observed Dr. Connelley. "It is a question of hours. He may be alive when we come to-morrow—but I think myself he cannot last out the day."

"He will go with the first or second ebb tide, I should say," corrected Dr. Murney; "most likely the second. Certainly I should say not the third."

There was one question Mr. Hanlon wanted to ask before they left.

"No doubt," he began, "Miss Moffat will wish to send for the rector; if she does, what am I to say?"

Dr. Murney took a pinch of snuff and looked at Dr. Connelley. Dr. Connelley looked out of the window and made no sign.

"I think," answered the former uneasily, "I should let her send for the rector, and explain the position to him."

"Precisely. But what is the position? He will never be conscious again."

"In this world," amended Dr. Connelley.

"In this world," repeated Dr. Murney, taking off his hat as if he were in a church.

There was a moment's respectful silence. Then said Dr. Murney, as if he conceived affairs which strictly speaking belonged to the clergy had been encroached upon by him,—

"Of course, Mr. Hanlon, had Dr. Connelley and I considered there was the remotest chance of a restoration to consciousness, we should at once have advised Miss Moffat to send for her father's attorney."

With which utterance Dr. Murney took his leave.

"So it is," thought Mr. Hanlon, after he had seen Dr. Connelley mounted and answered his farewell wave of the hand; "So it is; the law first—God after."

Till the great assize is over, who may tell how these apparent incongruities shall be settled; how the toil and trouble a man often entails on those who are to come after is quite compatible with a quiet death-bed and the rules of eternal justice!

To me it has always seemed that the person who, having time and inclination to make his peace with Heaven, as the not inappropriate phrase has it, makes that peace, and leaves mundane affairs to conduct themselves, must have failed in his worldly trust, must have neglected to put out at interest some of those talents with which he was entrusted.

In my poor opinion the doctors were right, and Mr. Hanlon wrong. A man, to all ordinary ways of thinking, ought not to be able to turn his eyes with a steady gaze heavenward so long as there is anything on earth demanding his attention, and yet it may be that when the supreme moment has arrived, and this world is vanishing, and another opening, it may be then, I say, that not merely do the most important projects of this life dwarf into insignificance, but that a glimpse is caught of that perfect faith which enables its possessor to leave the welfare of the nearest and dearest to him in higher hands than those of man.

Upon no other supposition does it appear to me possible to account for the supine selfishness with which those who have worldly goods to leave sometimes fold their hands and remain tranquil, whilst five minutes devoted to temporal matters might save miseries and heart-burnings untold.

Mr. Hanlon's speech, however, was prompted quite as much by the spirit of opposition as of religion. Had the other doctors suggested sending for a clergyman, he would most

probably have mentally sneered at " old women who believed in the efficacy of a death-bed repentance."

" Show me how a man lived, and I will tell you how he died," was one of his favourite quotations; and yet now, when he came face to face with a death which allowed no instant of preparation, he could not help admitting—he was not the advanced Republican of these times, recollect—there must be something in the almost universal desire human beings feel to be permitted to linger, if only for a few minutes, on the shores of that mighty ocean which washes on the one side the fair land of life, and on the other the hidden mysteries of eternity.

So far as Mr. Moffat's temporal affairs were concerned, he had left nothing to be settled in a hurry at the last hour of his existence. In the methodical, self-contained life he had led there was no sign to indicate the manner of death he should die. Probably he himself never imagined for a moment he should be called upon to leave this world except in the most orderly and usual manner.

Nevertheless his affairs were in perfect order. All the attorneys and accountants in Ireland could not have put them in more intelligible shape.

Concerning other matters, who could tell? Himself and his Maker alone knew how far the peremptory summons found him ready to leave a world which had always been a pleasant one to the owner of Bayview.

The clergyman was sent for and came, but it all turned out as Dr. Murney had predicted.

The tide ebbed, and the tide flowed; when it ebbed again his soul set forth on a longer and more awful voyage than mortal mariner ever undertook.

Little more than thirty hours had passed since Grace walked slowly homeward from the Lone Rock, and yet the whole current and colour of her life was changed. The sunbeams danced merrily on the waters, the sea rippled in once more upon the shore, the trees and shrubs shook out their green foliage, and the air was almost heavy with the rich perfumes of summer. In the distance the hills seemed almost to melt into the soft blue of the sky. Everywhere there was beauty, and gladness, and sunshine, but Grace saw nothing of the beauty, felt nothing of the gladness. Over the house there brooded the shadow of mighty wings, for the angel of death had paused in his flight; one whose voice had

been so suddenly stilled lay silent within; he who had been master there might dwell in that pleasant abode—never more.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SAYING GOOD-BYE.

The summer was gone and early autumn had come before Grace Moffat walked beyond the precincts of Bayview. Sorrow not sickness had kept her solitary. With the bitterness of her grief she could not endure friends or strangers to meddle, and so all alone she bore the first brunt of her trouble, all alone she formed her plans, rooted up the old projects and fanciful aims of her past life, and, spite of her former convictions on the subject of absenteeism, determined to leave Ireland, if not for ever, at all events for a considerable period.

In truth, without sacrificing her liberty she could not well have remained there.

Although in the eyes of Kingslough she was fast verging towards the sere and yellow leaf period of life, she was not old enough to set Mrs. Grundy at defiance and reside at Bayview without a duenna, and that was an encumbrance Grace had no desire to burden herself with. Further, she knew that every eligible man within reach would rush to offer her consolation in the first instance, and his hand in the second; and that mothers would outvie each other in offering to supply a father's place to so eligible a daughter-in-law as herself.

She was of course a much more desirable investment in the matrimonial market than had been the case during her father's life-time. All he once possessed was hers now unreservedly; and amongst men in search of rich wives, the increased value of Miss Moffat's hand might readily have been computed by a rule-of-three sum.

All this Grace felt bitterly. Now when she wanted a friend as she had never wanted one before, she found herself surrounded by those who all, she suspected, held a second purpose concealed behind their kindly advances.

Perhaps she wronged the impulses of many a warm heart by this idea, but money was an article truly needed at that

time amongst the Irish gentry. Heiresses were scarce, encumbered estates numerous. So to speak, the bulk of the old families were in a state of insolvency, and driven to their wits' ends to avert the final catastrophe which the famine only precipitated, which it alone certainly never could have induced amongst an aristocracy already tottering to the verge of ruin.

How were the heirs of impoverished estates covered with debt as with a garment to mend their position except by marriage?

Every profession was overstocked; they could not go into trade. Even had they possessed the requisite ability necessary to carry on a business successfully, the prejudices of the country must have deterred them from attempting to mend matters by a move in that direction.

A few went to India, where some succeeded and others died. Australia and the West Indies absorbed most of the adventurous or speculative youth of the period. In Australia they led a not disagreeable life, spite of hardships they certainly never could have endured at home. In the West Indies success resolved itself into a game at hazard with death. If death won, why they died, and there was an end of it; if they won, they won wealth as well.

For the male gentry who remained at home on the ancestral acres, there were but two courses open. One to marry a girl without money, and so hasten the advent of ruin; the other to marry a girl with money, and so defer to another generation that bankruptcy which it was impossible could be averted for ever.

In such a state of society the woman herself counted for very little. Love matches were made, it is true, every day, and resulted in a good deal of domestic unhappiness, pinching, saving, meanness, and an infinite number of children; but in those cases where love and prudence might have been supposed able to travel together, prudence turned love out of court, and no heiress, let her be as good and beautiful as she pleased, could make quite sure whether it were she who was being wooed, or the comfortable thousands the care and affection of some exceptionally fortunate ancestor had saved for her benefit.

Had she been deaf, humpbacked, lame, afflicted with a squint, eighty years of age, an heiress need not have despaired of attracting suitors.

When sons were shy or indifferent, when they seemed inclined to balk, as a hunting gentleman described their reluctance to go wooing, mothers courted sometimes not unsuccessfully in their stead; and had Grace been one of the blood royal, she could scarcely have had greater attention showered upon her than was the case once the funeral was over and the terms of her father's will known.

But to visitors Grace sedulously denied herself; invitations she steadily refused to accept, with the exception of one which she took time to consider.

It came from Mrs. Hartley, and was couched in these words :—

"I have been thinking much about you and your position, and putting my own selfish wishes on one side, really and truly believe the best thing you can do is to come to me for a time. If you stay where you are you will be driven to marry some one. The day must come when in utter weariness of saying 'No,' you will say 'Yes;' not because you care much for the suitor, or he is especially eligible, but because you feel one husband is preferable to a host of lovers.

"We shall not bore each other; you shall go your way, and I shall continue on mine.

"We will travel if you like; I shall not herald your arrival amongst my friends in the character of an heiress, be sure of that. I have no pet young man free of the house to whom I wish to see you married. Come and try the experiment, at all events. If you still preserve your Utopian ideas on the subject of Ireland's regeneration, it may be as well for you, before you begin the work, to see that the inhabitants of another country really manage to keep their doorsteps white—and their children's hair combed without the intervention of philanthropists like yourself, or demagogues like Mr. Hanlon. By the way, I hope you are not getting entangled in that quarter.

"No doubt the young man is clever, and behaved well at the time of your poor father's attack; but still, these are no reasons why he should marry your father's daughter.

"*It would not do*, Grace. If by your marriage to such a man you were able to ensure a meat dinner every day to all the tenant farmers in Ireland, you would find even that desirable result dearly purchased at the cost of so unsuitable an alliance. I do you the justice to feel certain your heart

is unaffected, but the circumstances have been propitious for touching your fancy; and I know of old what a snare that lively imagination you possess is capable of proving.

"Talking of imagination, what has become of the handsome hero of your teens? What has he done? What is he doing? I see the young earl is dead; and I understand that where the sapling fell it is to lie, as the means of the family do not permit of a second grand funeral within so short a time. Opinions here are divided as to the chances of Mr. Robert Somerford succeeding to the title.

"Some persons say the new earl is privately married and has a family, others that he will marry, others that he is and has always been single, that he has one foot in the grave and will shortly have another in likewise. It is a case in which I should decline to advise if you asked my opinion.

"If you marry Robert Somerford he may be Earl of Glendare. If you wait till he is Earl of Glendare, you may never be Countess of Glendare. And indeed I shall not desire to see you raised to the peerage. I do not think greatness would sit easily upon your shoulders. I believe you would be far happier married to some honest, honourable man in our own rank of life than you could be amongst the nobility. But there is no honest, honourable young man in our own rank of life residing near here whose cause I wish to plead, so you will be quite safe in coming to me. Will you *think* the matter over and come?"

Which letter Grace, after having thought the matter over, answered in these words:—

"I will go to you. Amongst all the people I know, there is no one I trust so fully, I believe in so implicitly as I do in you. I will let Bayview furnished. I will set my affairs in order, and leave the dear old place which has grown hateful to me—temporarily only, I hope—for I should like, when I have advanced sufficiently in age, to wear caps, and set the world's opinions at defiance, to return to Ireland, and spend my declining years and my income amongst mine 'ain folk.'

"Were I a stronger-minded woman, I suppose I should be able to conquer my grief and defy public criticism by starting on what you would call a career of philanthropy; but sorrow and the world, this little world of Kingslough, are, I confess, too much for me. As you say, I believe I should marry out of mere weariness of spirit.

"My pensioners I shall leave to Mrs. Larkin, who will rejoice in seeing the poor crowd round her door like robins in the winter.

"If anything were capable of making me laugh now, I should laugh at your idea of there being the slightest tender feeling between me and Mr. Hanlon. It is because by some nameless instinct I comprehend he never could by any chance care for me that I have seen more of him since my irreparable loss than has been perhaps, situated as I am, quite wise. I do not mean that he has called here often, or that I have chanced to meet him more than two or three times in my solitary walks by the seashore; but still you know what all small places are, what this small place is especially.

"Kingslough has talked, is talking—Kingslough says my head is turned, and that I am bent on flinging myself and my money away on a man who, some say—you remember Kingslough was always remarkable for its vehemence of expression, 'should be drummed out of the town'—and others think worthy of being—do not faint at the phrase, it is not mine—'strung up.'

"I have told you that I am positive Mr. Hanlon has no intention, even for the weal of the nation, of ever asking me to marry him; and yet I have an uneasy conviction he has some purpose to serve in cultivating better relations between us, which purpose I cannot at present divine. Moreover, I fear he has not given so direct a denial to those rumours which have bracketed his name and mine in such an undesirable connection as I think, were I a man, I should have done under similar circumstances. Kingslough says positively I have lost my heart and my senses—of the state of both you will be able to judge when we meet.

"Mr. Robert Somerford has at length given me the opportunity of refusing the honour of allying myself to the house of Glendare. I am glad of this, for I should scarcely have liked to leave Bayview whilst a chance remained of his doing so. He is handsomer than ever—years only improve his appearance; but were he as beautiful as Adonis he could never be my hero more.

"He was first sentimental and sympathetic, next pressing in his entreaties, and sceptical as to the genuineness of my 'No.' Lastly he was insolent and made as much of himself and his position as though he had been nursed in the

lap of royalty, and lived all his life on terms of equality with kings and queens. Familiarity may in my case have bred contempt, but I certainly never in the days when I admired him most considered he was so much my superior as appears is the case.

"I was equal, however, to the emergency; my desolate position, and my heavy mourning, the sorrow I have passed through, all combine to give me a courage I lacked in former times.

"Whilst he was still exalting himself and depreciating me—reciting the glories of the Glendares and contrasting the rank to which he could have raised me with the level of obscurity in which my refusal doomed me to remain for life, maundering on as one might have thought only an angry ill-bred woman or a spoiled child could have maundered—I rose and rang the bell.

"'Perhaps you will go now, Mr. Somerford,' I said, ruthlessly cutting across a sentence in which he was drawing a picture of my future life when married to a poor apothecary who had not even the recommendation of being possessed of all his senses. 'Perhaps you will go now, and spare yourself the vexation of being asked to leave before a servant.'

"I never saw a man so taken by surprise. He got up, made me a low, mocking bow, and quitted the room without uttering another word.

"Next time he asks any one to marry him, he says, he will take care the lady is in his own rank of life.

"He had been gradually provoking me, so at that point I broke silence and suggested the advisability of his ascertaining at the same time whether her worldly means were as excellent as his own.

"You will blame me for this, of course; but if I had bitten back the words they would have choked me.

"There was a time when I could have married him, and probably repented doing so every hour of my after life. I told him this, and he pressed me much to say when my feelings underwent so great a change.

"'On that day,' I answered, 'when you forced me to remark,—We had made you welcome at Bayview, and we now make you welcome to stay away.'

"It is only women with money, I fancy, who have to endure impertinence at the hands of their suitors. I suppose

the fact is a feeling of tenderness for the beloved one mingles even with the bitterness of losing her; but the wildest fancy cannot suppose any feeling of tenderness towards a fortune that a man sees plainly can never be possessed by him.

"Every obstacle to my accepting your invitation is now removed.

"Our servants seem determined to celebrate the event of their master's death with a series of weddings. He left them each a sum of money which, though it would appear little to English people of the same rank, is wealth to them, and a number of alliances have been arranged on the strength of these legacies which would have amused you had you seen the match-making in progress.

"On the whole, I am inclined to think that even in Ireland the possession of a nest egg produces the same effect upon human beings as it does upon a hen. A desire to lay another beside it becomes at once irresistible. After that remark you will not be surprised to hear the marriages in this establishment are chiefly remarkable for prudence. Jane, the dairymaid, is going to invest her money in cows, and a husband who owns a small cottage, the right of grazing over a large tract of common land, and a cabbage-garden, in which he proposes to erect byres. The cook, whom you may perhaps remember for the excellence of her omelets and the warmth of her temper, clubs her legacy with that of the coachman, and they intend to take a public-house five miles down the coast, and add posting to the business. I will not weary you with further matrimonial details.

"The youngest and prettiest of the establishment, my own little maid, takes her money, supplemented by a gift from me, back to her sickly mother.

"'I shall be able to stay with her always now, Miss Grace,' she said, crying and laughing in the same breath. 'I know enough, thanks be to you, to teach a little school, and we'll be happy as the day is long.'

"I have spoken to no one concerning my own plans; though of course every one knows I am going to leave Bayview, no person suspects that I intend to visit England.

"It has indeed been stated that I mean to spend the winter abroad with Lady Glendare. Her ladyship sent me a very civil note, favoured by Mrs. Dillwyn, saying how grieved she was to hear of my bereavement, speaking of her own loss, and adding that, if I thought a thorough change

would prove beneficial to my health and spirits, she would be delighted if I would visit her.

"Which was very kind, particularly from a member of a family famous for the shortness of their memories of favours received.

"This, I conclude, gave rise to the first report, which has now, however, been superseded by another. I am going to stay with Mr. Hanlon's mother, who is to come so far as Dublin to meet me!

"I mean to-day to bid good-bye to the Scotts; to-morrow, the next day, and the next, I shall employ in paying farewell visits and in gratifying the curiosity of my friends. Can you not fancy the entreaties with which I shall be assailed to stay in my own country and amongst my own people? My father's solicitor is delighted with the proposal that he and his family shall occupy Bayview for the autumn. He will endeavour to let it from November next.

"I shall break my journey at Dublin, from which place I will write to you again; but under any circumstances I hope to be talking to you face to face within a fortnight from the present time."

And having sealed and despatched this letter, Grace, as has been stated, for the first time since her father's death left behind her the grounds of Bayview, and wended her way towards the Castle Farm.

With a feeling of sick surprise she paused when she reached the top of the divisional road and looked at the fields to right and left. The meadows were still uncut; acres of long rich grass had been laid by the rain, trampled by the cattle. The potato blossoms had flowered and faded; the potato apples were beginning to turn brown on the stems, but not a spade had been put in to dig the roots out of the ground.

In the other lands lying around she saw hayricks; she beheld men busy at work; she heard the voices of the women and children who were almost playing at their labour, so rejoiced were all hearts to find the heavy crop the upturned earth disclosed; but at the Castle Farm there was no sign of toil or of gladness.

There was a dead stillness about the place which told Grace the beginning of the end had begun. Spite of the rich grass thick with clover, spite of the wealth lying buried in the broad ridges of the potato fields, spite of the luxuriance of the ripening corn, she knew ruin was sitting by the

one hospitable hearth, stealthily biding its time till it should turn husband and wife and children out of house and home upon the world.

No active signs of grief—no outbreak of sorrow could have affected Grace like the dumb testimony which gave evidence of the crisis that had come.

When before, in hay-time, had Amos and his boys and his men not been up at the first streak of light, in order to get well on with their labour before the sun gaining power—and the dews drying off the grass—made mowing weary work?

When had the potatoes ever lain in the ground as they were lying now? when had not all needful tasks been expedited and got well out of hand before the time came for the ingathering of the corn?

Miss Moffat's eyes filled with tears as she looked at the deserted fields that had borne their increase only to point more forcibly the ruin which was come to the Castle Farm.

If she had seen a sale going on in the place; had she beheld a crowd of strangers in the yard, and heard a babel of tongues in the air; had the horses and the cows and the busy fussing hens, and the fat well-to-do pigs been taken away while she looked, the scene could scarcely have struck her with the numb dread that for a time paralysed her steps.

Then it all came upon her. They had sown, but they might not reap; they had planted, but they might not gather; on the land they had held so long they were trespassers, and if they still remained in the old homestead it was only because there is nothing more difficult than to get rid of people who have determined to remain.

Amos Scott had so determined; but the law was closing him in slowly, surely.

It was eating his substance first; while he had a pound in the traditional stocking, or the ability to borrow a pound—while he had a shoe to his foot and a shirt to his back, it refrained from cutting short his torture, but once let the cruse fail; and the law would scourge him with scorpions out of that once happy garden which never again might seem like paradise to Amos or one of his family.

Out of the sunlight Grace passed into the house, where, by reason of the glare from which she had come, she could at first scarcely distinguish any object; but after a second or two she beheld Mrs. Scott, aged and haggard, who, in her

hands holding a coat of her husband's she had been engaged in patching, rose and bade her visitor welcome.

She was quite alone ; a rare thing in that populous house. Inside as out the same stillness prevailed, a stillness like unto the Egyptian darkness, inasmuch as it could be felt.

The first words uttered were by Mrs. Scott, in sympathy for Miss Moffat's affliction ; but Grace, though her burden seemed heavy, knew the dead had no need of help or remembrance, and here face to face with her was at least one human being who had.

"Tell me about yourselves," she said, passing her handkerchief across the large soft eyes that would encourage tears to shelter themselves under the white lids and long lashes. "We cannot do anything more for *him*. It was a great shock. I sometimes seem as if I were unable to realize it even yet ; but it is true, and I must learn to bear the greatest trouble God sends one of His creatures."

"The greatest, Miss ?" said Mrs. Scott inquiringly ; she was sympathetic and respectful, but she could not quite fall in with this opinion.

She had her trouble, and if she heard that the trouble of another might be greater, who shall blame her for being slow of belief.

There cannot be much doubt that the man who has broken his leg feels sceptical when told that his next neighbour who has broken his ankle is in worse case than he. As a matter of theory, people may sympathise with the griefs of their fellow-creatures, but as a matter of fact the only sorrows which are ever thoroughly understood are those a man has himself to bear ; and this is reasonable enough, remembering that after the lapse of even a short time a man finds it difficult to recall vividly the anguish and the shame and the agony he may once have been obliged to pass through.

Mrs. Scott's pain was very present with her, however, on that beautiful morning. She was in the midst of a trouble which might well have exhausted a more patient woman. She had to sit still and see her household gods broken one by one ; she was forced, as she said herself, to "bide quiet" whilst ruin stalked towards their home, drawing nearer every hour. Death to her seemed naturally a less trial than this lengthened torture, and she could not agree with her visitor when Miss Moffat answered,—

"The greatest because it is hopeless."

"Not making light of your trouble, Miss Grace, don't you think it may be just as hopeless a grief as death to feel yourself coming to want and your children to beggary?"

"If there was no way to avert such misfortunes, perhaps not," was the reply; "but it is because we cannot avert death, because we can never hope in this world to see those who are gone, that I say death is so terrible a grief."

"It is terrible," Mrs. Scott agreed; "but I don't feel as if it was as hard a sorrow as to see everything going, and not be able to put out a finger to save us from ruin. There are the potatoes undug in the ground, and I dursn't take up a root of them to boil for the dinner. We have had to sell the cows, for we were "threatened" if we tried to graze them. The boys have nothing to do, and the meadows are all laid; but they warned Amos off when he went to mow. They poisoned our dog because he flew at one of the bailiffs Brady sent; and they tell me now Brady is going to get the grass in, and the potatoes up, and the corn cut when it ripens, if he has to bring a regiment of soldiers to protect his men."

At the idea of which imposing array Mrs. Scott dropped her work on her knee, heaved a deep sigh, and remarked,—

"God alone knows what the end will be!"

"I will tell you what the end ought to be," said Grace kindly. "You ought to begin to pack up your belongings now, and leave the Castle Farm as soon as ever you can get out of it."

"Amos 'll never leave it alive," she answered. "He is not a hard man to talk to in a general way, but Brady has tried to head him, and it has made him that dour, there is no reasoning with him."

"Have you ever really tried to reason with him?" Miss Moffat inquired.

"Not at first, I'll own it. I was as keen on as himself for fighting to the last; but, oh! Miss Grace, when the trouble comes inside the door, it is the woman feels it. She must hold up and have a bite for the men folks to eat if her heart is just breaking; and I'm fairly tired of it. I feel I'd be that glad to creep into any hole where we could be quiet, I couldn't tell you."

"Where is Amos?" asked her visitor, after a pause.

"Gone to Glenwellan to see the lawyer; now we have sold Tom he has to walk there and back every step of the

way. He is spending his all in law, Miss Grace. Shure the very money I got for the hens and the ducks and the other cratures he made me give him, and me saving it for the time when we'll want it sorely."

"What does Amos hope to do?" inquired Grace. "What does he expect the lawyers can do for him?"

"That's beyond me to tell. He wants his rights, and he says he'll have them."

"What are his rights?"

"Oh, that's easy telling; this place he paid the renewal of."

"I am going away,——" began Grace, with apparent irrelevance.

"So I heard tell," interpolated Mrs. Scott.

"And before I go I want to put this matter before you clearly, as I see it; as others, wiser and more capable than I, see it also."

"Yes, Miss," said Mrs. Scott in a tone which implied that Grace might talk and she herself might listen, but that her opinions would remain the same.

And indeed is this not always the case? Is it not always when talking and listening are signally useless that opinions alter?"

"Supposing," said Grace, a little fluttered by reason of her own boldness, "I went to Dublin and said I must have a new piano."

"Likely you will some day," agreed Mrs. Scott, as her visitor paused for a moment and hesitated.

"And suppose for the sake of argument," went on Grace, "I decided to spend a hundred pounds."

"It would be a heap of money," commented her auditor.

"Or fifty, or twenty," said Miss Moffat, seeing her mistake; "say twenty pounds; and that I chose a piano and told the man where to send it, and paid him the money and took no receipt for it. After I leave, another person sees the same piano, likes it, pays the money, and gets a receipt. Shortly I begin to wonder why the instrument is not sent home, and I write to the seller. I receive an answer saying he is dead, and that no one knows anything about the matter except that the piano I mention has been sold and delivered to Mr. So-and-so. Now such a case would be undoubtedly a hard one for me, but I should never think of throwing good money after bad in trying to put spilt milk back into a

basin; and yet this is what Amos persists in attempting. Do you understand what I mean?"

"You speak very clever, Miss Grace," was the reply.

"I am afraid I do not speak at all cleverly," said her visitor. "I wish any words of mine could persuade Amos and you how utterly useless it is for you to continue the resistance he has begun."

"Would you have him give up everything, then, Miss, and see us turned out on the world—we who have always tried to keep decent and respectable as you know, Miss Grace?"

"I do know," was the answer, "but I see no help for it—if a thing has to be done at last, it may as well and better be done at first."

"I am thinking Amos will fight it to the end," said Mrs. Scott calmly.

"But what folly it is!" exclaimed Miss Moffat.

"Like enough; I wouldn't be so ill bred as to contradict you, Miss, even if I could."

"But it is impossible you can be happy or comfortable living in this sort of way."

"Happy, comfortable," repeated the poor woman, then added with sudden vehemence, "And who is it that has made us unhappy and uncomfortable, but that villain Brady? It'll come home to him though; sure as sure, Miss Grace, it will. We may not live to see it, but the day will come that others will mind what Brady done to us and say, 'Serve him right,' no matter what trouble is laid upon him."

"But you do not wish any harm to happen to him?" suggested Grace, who, having no personal feud with Mr. Brady, naturally felt shocked at Mrs. Scott's bitterness of expression.

"Don't I?" retorted the woman. "It would be blessed news if one came in now and said, 'Brady is lying stiff and stark out in the field yonder.'"

"Hush, hush, hush!" entreated Grace, laying her hand on the lean unlovely arm which had once been plump and comely. "Oh! I wish I could talk to you as I want to talk. I wish I could say good things as other people are able. I wish I could persuade you to bear your heavy burden patiently, feeling certain God in His own good time will lighten it for you. I cannot think there is any reality in religion if it does not support us in trials like these, and you

are a religious woman, dear Mrs. Scott. I remember, as if it was yesterday, the Bible stories you used to tell me when I was a bit of a thing wearing mourning for the first time."

Mrs. Scott's face began to work, then her eyes filled with tears, then one slowly trickled down her cheek, which she wiped away with the corner of her checked apron, then with a catching sob, she said,—

"Ay, those were brave days, Miss Grace, brave, heartsome days. It was easy to feel good and Christian-like then, and wish well to everybody; but I can't do it now, I cannot. When I'm sitting here all alone, texts come into my head; but they are all what I used to call bad ones, about vengeance, and hatred, and punishment. There are no others I can mind now. That thief of the world has destroyed us body and soul, but it will come to him. He will get his deserts yet."

Grace rose, and walked into an inner room, where, on the top of a chest of drawers, bright as beeswax could keep them, lay the family Bible, with Scott's spectacles, heirlooms like the book, reposing upon it.

Lifting the Bible she carried it out, placed it upon the dresser, and, turning to the Gospels, read the last six verses of the fifth chapter of St. Matthew softly and slowly. Then she closed the volume and took it back again.

"It's well for them that can do all that," said Mrs. Scott, not defiantly, but in simple good faith.

"Some day we shall all be able to feel it, and do it, please God," answered Grace, and, stooping over the back of Mrs. Scott's chair, she kissed the face of the humble friend who had once been like a mother to her.

"Good-bye," she said. "Let Reuben write to me, and get Amos away from here, if you can, before worse comes of it."

"What is this, Miss Grace?" asked Mrs. Scott, as her visitor laid a small packet in her lap.

"It is what you will need," said Grace, "when perhaps I am not near at hand to come to for it."

"Is it money?" inquired the woman.

"Yes; surely you do not mind taking it from me?"

"No, I wouldn't mind. There aren't many I could ask to help us, or that I could take help from; but I am not that high in my turn I'd refuse it from you. Take it with you though, Miss Grace. Don't leave it here. I could not keep it secret from the good man—we have never had anything

separate, and he'd either be angry with me for taking it, or else he'd want it to spend on the law."

"In that case I will not leave it," said Grace emphatically; "only remember this one thing,—whilst I am alive and have a pound, you need never want. Bid me good-bye now, for I must go."

"Good-bye," answered Mrs. Scott, taking Grace's hand in her own, after carefully wiping the latter on her apron; "God send you safe to England and back again?" and with this customary form of farewell, which, familiar as it is to those resident in Ireland, always strikes solemnly on the ear, Mrs. Scott suffered her visitor to depart, watching her retreating figure till it was lost to sight, and then returning to her seat and her occupation.

"And back again!" Grace repeated to herself, and she looked over the glory of land and water—hill and wood lying calm and beautiful under a flood of golden sunshine. "And back again! what will have happened, I wonder, by the time I return?"

CHAPTER XXV.

BREAKING THE ICE.

Were I to say that at first Miss Moffat neither admired the country nor liked the people of England, I should only be expressing the sentiments of an entire nation in the person of a single individual; other people may have met with Irish men and Irish women who took kindly to Saxon soil on the first intention, but for my own part I have still to see the recently imported Celt willing to admit there can be any good thing found in the land.

It is very curious to consider how rapidly educated English tourists take to Ireland—to the inhabitants, the brogue, the scenery, the whisky—and then to contrast with this the length of time required to acclimatize an Irish person of any rank to England and English ways. Safely, I think, it may be asserted that there is nothing on this side the channel, from the red-tiled roof of picturesque old barns to the glories of the Row, which finds favour in Hibernian eyes. They may like England at last—many do—but they never like it at first.

To this rule Grace formed no exception. There was nothing she liked in the foreign land to which she had voluntarily exiled herself. Amongst her own country people, she even fancied Mrs. Hartley had changed, and changed for the worse, from the decided, incisive widow, whose tongue had been the terror and whose dress had been the envy of feminine Kingslough.

She was more conventional and less amusing, the young lady considered; but Mrs. Hartley's latest surroundings presented no temptations to unconventionality, and it would have been extremely difficult to prove herself clever at the expense of the eminently dull and decorous people amongst whom her lot was now cast.

The style in which her friend lived was also at first a trial to Grace.

The extreme simplicity of her own bringing up—the modesty of the Bayview establishment—the unpretending fashion of receiving and visiting that at one time obtained in Ireland rendered the rules and ceremonies of—to quote Mrs. Hartley—"a more advanced civilization" irksome in the extreme to a person who had from her childhood upwards been accustomed to an exceptional freedom of action; whilst after the inoffensive familiarity of Irish servants, the formality and decorum of Mrs. Hartley's highly-trained domestics seemed cold and heartless.

In a word, Miss Grace was more than slightly home-sick; in all probability, had she possessed a home to go back to, she would have received some early communication compelling her to return to Ireland.

All of this, or at least much of this, so shrewd a woman as Mrs. Hartley could not fail to notice; she had expected the desire to manifest itself, though not exactly so violently, and she was accordingly quite prepared to let it run its course without much interference from her.

It was not in her nature, however, to refrain altogether from a little raillery on the subject.

"The cakes and the ales of this gormandizing land will find favour in your eyes some day, Grace," she remarked. "I do not despair of hearing you confess other forms of diet may be as appetizing as milk and potatoes."

"I can fancy many things more appetizing than potatoes boiled in England," Miss Moffat would retort, not without some slight sign of irritation. Her temper was not quite

so sweet, Mrs. Hartley noticed, as had been the case formerly.

"She will not make an amiable old maid," considered her friend. "As she gets on in life her wine will turn to vinegar; she is the kind of woman who ought to have a husband and half-a-dozen children, to prevent her growing morbid and disagreeable—like all other philanthropists, she has had some serious disappointments, and I must say they have not improved her. She ought to marry; but, like her, I confess I cannot imagine who the happy man is to be. Beauty, wealth, amiability! she has the three gifts men value most, and yet it seems to me that not a man suitable in any solitary respect has ever yet asked her to be his wife—except John Riley. I wonder what he would think of her now? Who could have imagined she would ever have developed into so lovely a creature?"

There were two things by which Mrs. Hartley set great store—competence and beauty.

Poor people and ugly people were to her as repellent as many diseases. Genteel poverty was one of her abhorrences, plain faces another; and it may therefore be imagined that when she found two most desirable advantages combined in one human being, she gave way to exultation so perfectly frank that it struck Grace with amazement.

"What a beautiful creature you are!" she said as, Grace seated beside her in the carriage, they drove along the level English roads to Mrs. Hartley's house.

"I am not very beautiful now, I am afraid," answered Miss Moffat; "tired, burnt up with the sun and the wind, and smothered with dust, I feel utterly ashamed of my appearance."

"Ah! well, you need not be, my dear. I always thought you would grow up very pretty, but certainly I never expected to see you so pretty as you are. What do the Kingslough oracles think of Grace Moffat now?"

"The Kingslough oracles disapprove of my being personally presentable," Grace answered. "They likewise think it a pity that, if I were designed to be good-looking, good looks were not conferred upon me in my youth. Further, they consider that as I have plenty of money, I ought to be plain; and, besides all this, they think I am not so particularly good-looking after all."

"The dear Kingslough! It is like a dream of old times to hear its opinions summed up so concisely."

"I wonder what Kingslough would think of your present state of magnificence," said Grace, a little mischievously. "If you were to drive through Kingslough in this carriage, you would have the whole town out, and furnish conversation for a month."

Mrs. Hartley laughed, but her mirth was a little forced; she did not like her splendour dimmed by the breath of ridicule, but she was too much a woman of the world to show her annoyance.

"When we are in Turkey we do as the Turkeys do, to borrow a phrase from one of your own countrymen," she answered. "If any adverse wind stranded me to-morrow in Ireland, I should at once purchase a jaunting-car and advertise for a Protestant without incumbrance, able to drive and wait at table."

Miss Moffat remembered that when the speaker was stranded in Kingslough she dispensed even with the jaunting-car; but Mrs. Hartley had so neatly hit off the popular method of proceeding, that Grace, tired as she was, and feeling rather lonely and miserable, thought that silence might be wisdom, and refrained from reminding her friend of the dreary drives they had taken in that particular style of conveyance which the young lady detested.

"Besides," went on Mrs. Hartley, as though guessing at her companion's thoughts, "I am now a much richer woman than I was in those days. Money has come to me as it generally does to people who have it. Gold has a way of attracting gold which is certainly very remarkable. I used to think my income was as large as I should care to have it, but since more has been added I find I can manage to spend it very comfortably."

This scrap of conversation may be taken as samples of many which followed. Mrs. Hartley and her guest talked, walked, drove, paid visits together, but they did not at once fall into the old familiar relations that had formerly been so pleasant.

In effect both were different persons from the young heiress and the rich English widow of Grace's genial spring-time; and even if they had not so changed, it is a difficult matter to take up, after years of separation, the thread of a friendship at the precise point where it was dropped, and go on weaving the many-coloured web of intimate association as though nothing had occurred to stop its progress.

Besides this, that which Grace styled "Mrs. Hartley's magnificence" was not a thing this country-bred maiden could accustom herself to in a moment.

Hers was a model property; small, it is true, but maintained as Grace had never seen any place maintained before, unless indeed it might be a botanical garden. Not half so large as Bayview, a very doll's house and toy grounds in comparison with those of Woodbrook! but the order which kept the lawns trimmed, the hedges clipped, the walks rolled, the house from garret to cellar a marvel of comfort and luxury, was enough to make a thoughtful and devoted Irishwoman like Grace ask herself a few very awkward questions, and make her feel for the moment angry because she could not avoid a sensation of shame at the contrast suggested.

"I wish I could ever hope to be so admirable a manager in all respects as you are, Mrs. Hartley," said Grace one day, after she had heard that lady issue some rather peremptory commands to her head gardener.

"One cannot be a handsome young thing like you and a sharp old busybody like myself," replied Mrs. Hartley, not displeased, however, at the compliment; "and then remember I was born and brought up in a country where order is Heaven's first law; in a land where it is the fashion to keep the doorsteps white, it is natural that one should like to see one's own steps presentable. There is a great deal in habit. Although in the abstract no doubt you admire English order and cleanliness, still I have no doubt but that in your heart of hearts you think we are fussy and over-particular.

Miss Moffat laughed and coloured.

"To be quite frank," she replied, "I like the result produced, but I do not like the means by which it is produced. Perpetual hearthstoning and rolling and mowing and cutting and clipping produce marvellous effects, I confess; but still I think the constant recurrence of such days of small things must tend to dwarf the intellect and make life seem a very poor affair."

"Irish, my dear, very; but these are opinions about which there is no use arguing. I should have considered begging in a town where I knew every man, woman and child, and where every man, woman and child knew me, a somewhat monotonous occupation; and I fail to see anything calculated to enlarge the intellect in the acts of planting potatoes all

day and eating them for breakfast, dinner and supper. Still there is a certain amount of truth in what you say, or rather imply. The English are not an imaginative people, and they do not consider it necessary to idealise work. They labour for so much a day, and honestly say so. It is in the nature of a quick, sympathetic nation to be desultory, and the Irish are desultory till they come to England, when they suddenly develop the most marvellous perseverance, and trot up and down ladders with hods on their shoulders in a manner wonderful to behold."

"Dear Mrs. Hartley, how I wish I could make you like the Irish!" said Grace.

"I like you; is not that sufficient?" was the prompt reply.

"No, not half, nor quarter."

"Ah! my love, you are like those unreasonable women who expect their husbands to be fond, not merely of them but of the whole of their relations, to the sixth and seventh cousins."

It was a singular fact, and one Grace could not avoid remarking to herself, that on paper she and Mrs. Hartley had been much more confidential and friendly than they seemed ever likely to become while they remained face to face. Doubtless this arose from the circumstance that in their correspondence Mrs. Hartley still thought of Grace as the young girl in whose fortunes she had once taken an almost motherly interest, whilst Grace pictured Mrs. Hartley as the kindly, middle-aged lady who had petted and ridiculed and been fond of her ever since she attained to the dignity of long frocks and turned-up hair.

For Grace had never worn her hair in ringlets like Nettie; not all the papers or irons on earth could have given her hair that curl which Kingslough so much admired in Miss O'Hara; and after having had her locks twisted up into some hundreds of little twists and screws, Grace would appear an hour after her nurse had unfurled her curls with her hair as straight as if no attempt had ever been made to dress it in the approved fashion.

Thus it came to pass that as those were not the days in which children's tresses were allowed to float in the wind, or stream down to their waists through the valley between their shoulders, Grace was condemned to have her hair done up in two long plaits, which were sometimes worn as pigtails, and sometimes doubled up like curtain-holders,

being tied together at the nape of the neck by ribbons brown or blue.

Considering that blue did not suit the child, and that a more hideous style of dressing the hair never prevailed, it may be suggested that Kingslough had some excuse for the opinion at which it then arrived concerning little Miss Moffat's looks.

Those days were gone, the days of plum-cake and delightful evenings, with two people for a whole party, and Grace allowed to make the tea; the days when Mrs. Hartley used to ask the girl to spend pleasant afternoons with her, and took her drives and walks, and was very good to her altogether.

Yes, they were gone, as the Grace of old was gone; the plain chrysalis who was now so pretty a creature, the little, grave, silent orphan who, wont to blush when any one spoke to her, could now speak for herself in any place and in any company, but who could not talk confidentially to Mrs. Hartley, perhaps for the reason that Mrs. Hartley now felt a difficulty in asking questions she once would not have hesitated to put by letter.

There was a break, not caused by disagreement, but by apparent lack of sympathy between them, which both felt painfully, which each would have given much to bridge over. I think this kind of reserve between staunch friends is by no means so uncommon as many people imagine. It is more difficult to get the heart to break silence than the tongue, and for this reason the most fluent talkers are not those who speak of their tenderest feelings.

How long this might have gone on it is hard to conjecture, had there not one morning arrived a letter for Miss Moffat, directed in a man's handwriting. Mrs. Hartley noticed the fact. It was the first communication from any gentleman, except her lawyer, Grace had received since her arrival. Her friend knew this, because she opened the post-bag and dealt out its contents.

The whole day after Grace was silent and thoughtful. Mrs. Hartley noticed she looked in an abstracted manner out of the window, and that occasionally she fixed her eyes on her with a sort of questioning and anxious expression.

Towards evening Mrs. Hartley determined to break the ice. "That girl has something on her mind," she considered as she entered the drawing-room five minutes before dinner, "I

must find out what it is," and she proved herself as good as her words.

They had dined, dessert was on the table, Grace was toying with some fruit on her plate, Mrs. Hartley had swallowed two of the three glasses of port her doctor assured her she ought to take with as "much regularity as if it were medicine."

At this precise stage of the proceedings she had made up her mind to speak, and with Mrs. Hartley, to make up her mind was to do.

"Grace," she began, "there is something troubling you."

"Yes, Mrs. Hartley, I have a very great trouble," answered Grace calmly.

In an access of excitement Mrs. Hartley poured out and swallowed that third glass of port.

"Let us go into the other room, where we can talk comfortably, my dear," she said, rising; and Grace, nothing loth, left her untouched fruit, walked across the hall into the snug little drawing-room she had learned to love so much, opening on one side to a conservatory, and on the other to a lawn kept smooth and soft as velvet.

After all, spite of its shrubs, its trees, its long sea frontage, and its acres of garden ground, there was room for much improvement at Bayview.

"If ever I return to Ireland," Grace had said to herself many and many a time, "I will have that grass kept like these English lawns."

And yet after all there is grass in the Emerald Isle smoother, shorter, closer, and softer than any in England. Only in that case sheep have been the mowers. I know an island in a lake where they fatten in six weeks, and where it is perhaps unnecessary to say stand the ruins of an old monastery.

CHAPTER XXVI.

GRACE TELLS HER STORY.

Grace's experiences of drawing-rooms in her own country had been considerable.

She had been acquainted from her childhood with immense apartments, commanding sea and land views. She knew the orthodox style of furniture which upholsterers sent in as a

species of groundwork upon which individual fancy subsequently painted the form of its own especial idiosyncrasy. She had beheld acres of carpeting, hangings which were miracles of heaviness and expense, chairs first covered with green, or amber, or ponceau, or silver grey, to match the curtains, and then wrapped up in holland, to preserve their beauty intact, ponderous loo and sofa tables, everything as good as money could buy, and expected to last accordingly; these were some of the necessaries without which no drawing-room in a gentleman's house could be considered orthodox; but when all such things had been provided, it was admissible to add such other elegances as personal taste might suggest.

Personal taste or family circumstances produced occasionally some very curious devices in the way of ornamentation. Relics from Pompeii would be the attraction of one home; carved temples, cedar-wood boxes, daggers with richly-ornamented handles, spoke in another of some male relative who had crossed the sea, and brought back flotsam and jetsom with him. Dogs, parrots, flowers, depicted in wool on canvas, testified in many homes to the indefatigable industry of its female occupants; in rare cases, rare because the materials were for those days costly, beadwork in unlimited quantities charmed the beholder; occasionally old china, which would now fetch fabulous prices in London, adorned the chiffoniers, whatnots, and cabinets of persons who had none too much money to spare, whilst in almost all cases where there were young ladies, or even middle-aged, the open piano, the litter of music, often a harp or a guitar, spoke of the love of that talent which is bestowed so much more freely on Irish than English women.

All these rooms, and many others besides, Grace had been free of; rooms with a certain stately dignity about them, rooms connected with which she had many a pleasant childish and girlish memory, but a drawing-room like Mrs. Hartley's was as far beyond her imagination as that other style of apartment generally and prudently unoccupied which obtains in the suburbs of London, and in the houses of all highly respectable and sober-minded middle-class people throughout England generally.

Luxury in those days had not attained to the height to which it has since sprung. It has been reserved for the reign of her present Majesty to witness a more rapid transition from comparative simplicity of living, lodging, dressing,

spending, to the wildest extravagance of expenditure in all ranks, than has ever occurred before at any era, or in any nation; and for this reason the decorations and furniture which seemed perfection to Grace Moffat, would no doubt appear extremely poor and commonplace if catalogued for the benefit of the reader.

In the nature of almost every woman there is, I suspect, a latent, cat-like love of things soft, bright, cosy, and there was something in the whole aspect of Mrs. Hartley's drawing-room which appealed to this sense in Grace's nature. She liked walking over the thick carpet; the white sheepskin hearthrug on which generally reposed a King Charles that hated Grace with a detestation she cordially reciprocated; the fire-light reflected from mirrors, sparkling against lustres; the lovely water-colour drawings hanging on the walls; the delightful easy chairs; the statuettes; the flowers piled up in banks between the long French windows, and the conservatory filled with rare and beautiful plants; all these things were pleasant as they were novel to the rich widow's visitor.

In Mrs. Hartley's opinion, however, the very greatest ornament her room had ever held was Grace Moffat, and the admiration she always entertained for her guest was heightened as they entered the apartment together, by the new interest now attaching to her, as the older lady felt satisfied must be the case. Some misplaced affection, some love entanglement which she had kept secret until she could endure to keep silent no longer.

"Now sit down, dear, and tell me all about it; you prefer the low chair, I know," began Mrs. Hartley; but Grace answered,—

"I should like to sit on the rug close by you, if I may, and if Jet does not object to my company."

"He shall be taken away," said Jet's mistress, laying her hands on the bell.

"No!" interposed Grace. "I will try to be amiable to him, if he will be tolerant of me," and she sat down; a pretty picture in the fire-light, her black dress disposing itself in graceful folds over the white rug, her hands crossed idly in her lap, and her face upturned to Mrs. Hartley, who, stooping, kissed it almost involuntarily.

"Now who is he?" asked the widow.

"There is no 'he' in my story," Grace answered; "at

least no 'he' in your sense. I hope you will not be disappointed when I tell you my trouble has nothing to do with love, but a very great deal to do with money."

"So far, my dear, I think money has been a trouble to you; when you are as old as I am you will understand the trouble of having money is by no means comparable to the trouble of being without it."

"In this case my money has nothing to do with the story."

"Then, for mercy's sake, child, tell me what has to do with it."

"I have," Grace answered; "a secret has been confided to me that I do not know how to deal with; a responsibility has been put upon me which makes me wretched. I fully intended when I first came here to tell you all about the matter, but——"

"But what?" asked Mrs. Hartley softly; "this is the light, and you are in the mood for confession, let us get that little 'but' out of the way now—for ever."

"I will try," said Grace boldly. "You are not really changed in the least; you are the same true, dear friend you were in the old Kingslough days when Nettie made such a mess of her life; but everything about you is changed. The grandeur—don't laugh at me—and the formality, and the stateliness of your surroundings threw me back at first, and then I fancy you thought I was changed, and so——"

"Yes; you need not try to finish; spite of your occasional little whiffs of temper, you have changed, or rather developed, into one of the sweetest and most lovable women I have ever known. And now you are getting accustomed to what you call my grandeur, and English ways do not seem so objectionable as they did at first, and we are going this evening to break the ice once and for always; and you have a story to tell, and I am in one of my best moods for listening."

"My story is a very short one, but it will interest you, for it concerns the Rileys."

"Which of them?"

"All; father, mother, sisters, brother," answered Grace. "The night my father was taken ill I was told something which may affect them all most seriously. It was my intention to consult him in the matter, but after—after his death you may imagine I forgot for a time in my own grief the possible griefs of other people. Before I left Ireland, how-

ever, I received a note containing the words, 'Have you forgotten what I told you?' To-day a second note is forwarded to me repeating the same inquiry."

"May I ask the name of the writer?"

"No; there is my difficulty. I am bound to silence as regards my informant. But for that, I should have sent for General Riley and told him all I had learned."

"The Rileys and you have not been very intimate since you were sweet seventeen?" said Mrs. Hartley interrogatively.

"No," was the reply. "We of course are friendly if we happen to meet, but Mrs. Riley's disappointment at my refusing John was so great that she ceased visiting Bayview entirely. I felt rather hurt that she never called upon me after my loss. The General was ill; indeed his health has been bad for a long time past, but I thought and think she and the girls might have let bygones be bygones, and come and said, 'We are sorry for your trouble.'"

"It certainly would have been more graceful," remarked Mrs. Hartley; "but, then, one never associates the ideas of grace and Mrs. Riley together. But to come to your story."

"You know there is a mortgage on Woodbrook?"

"I knew there was one, and to know that, is to conclude there is one still. I never heard of a mortgage being paid off in Ireland; such a thing might have happened, but I do not think it likely."

"The Woodbrook mortgage has not been paid at all events," replied Grace; "but, so far as I can gather, it has changed hands."

"In whose hands is it now, then?"

"In Mr. Brady's."

"What! the man Nettie ran away with?"

"The same."

"Where on earth did he get enough money to enable him to advance such a sum?"

"I have not the faintest idea."

"What could have induced him to do a thing of the kind?"

"Revenge. He means to turn the Rileys out of Woodbrook; at least so I am informed."

"Can you trust your informant?"

"Fully; there is, I think, not the slightest hope of"—— Grace hesitated; she could not say "his being mistaken,"

and she would not say "her;" so she altered the form of her sentence, and finished it by adding, "there cannot be any mistake in the matter."

Mrs. Hartley lay back in her chair and thought in silence. She was quick enough to grasp the whole meaning of Grace's communication, and she understood sufficient of legal matters to comprehend how to a certain extent the desire of Mr. Brady's heart might be compassed.

"What can be done?" Grace asked at length.

"I do not see that either of us can do anything," was the reply. "General Riley ought to be told by some one, and the question naturally arises by whom? Shall I write to him, if you feel any hesitation about re-opening your acquaintance with the family?"

"I should not have any feeling of that kind to influence me in such a case as this," Grace answered; "but if I wrote to the General, it would be certain in some way to reach Mr. Brady's ears, and if it did——"

"Supposing it did?"

"By putting two and two together he might, he would, suspect from whom I received my information."

"And in that event disastrous results might ensue to your nameless friend?"

"I believe so."

"I think you had better tell me the name of your friend."

"I cannot. I promised to keep it a secret. It fills me with such dread and apprehension to fancy what might occur if Mr. Brady ever should learn who betrayed him, that I feel tempted at times to let matters take their course. Surely the General is old enough to manage his affairs without any assistance from me?"

"He may be old enough, but he is far from wise enough. If Mr. Brady has really laid a trap for him, he will walk into it as innocently as a child; and then, some fine day, we shall hear they have all to leave Woodbrook; that the shock has killed the General; and that when John returns there will not be an acre of land left of his inheritance."

"I thought of writing an anonymous letter," said Grace innocently; "but then no one ever takes any notice of anonymous letters."

"It is well you did not carry that plan into execution," remarked Mrs. Hartley. "I must think the matter over, Grace. It has come upon me suddenly; in fact, I cannot

realize such a complication. You are positive," she went on, "that you have not been deceived; that the he, she, or it who told you the story did so in perfect good faith?"

"Yes, quite positive; the risk incurred alone would satisfy me of that, even if other circumstances had failed to do so."

"Do you know it strikes me you have taken the whole affair rather coolly, young lady!" said Mrs. Hartley. "I think, even although you did refuse John Riley, *he* would not have permitted months to pass without letting *you* know your fortune was in danger, had the cases been reversed."

"I have felt something of what you express," Grace replied, "and suffered in consequence. Had John been in this country, I should have told him at once—I should have felt safe with him—but I am afraid of telling the General. I suppose I must be a great coward, but I never dreaded anything so much as having it known the information came from me. I could have trusted John's discretion, I cannot trust that of the General or Mrs. Riley or the girls."

"Still we must not let them be utterly beggared without lifting a finger to save them. Besides, your friend must wish them to know their danger, or such a communication would never have been made; and if harm does come of Mr. Brady hearing you are acquainted with his secrets, it seems to me that you are in no way responsible for it."

"Harm must not come, Mrs. Hartley," said Grace earnestly. "If you can think of any way in which we can let the General know without his connecting either of us with the intelligence—well; but if not, the very best thing that could be done would be for you to write to John and tell him that he must come home."

"And find Mr. Brady 'in possession' of the property!" finished Mrs. Hartley. "I suspect there is no time to be lost about the matter, and that, clever as we both are, we shall have to get the assistance of some man in it. Poor John! it would indeed be hard to lose both wife and lands."

"I should have thought he might have found the former without much difficulty ere this," said Grace.

"Then, my dear, you judged Mr. John Riley, as usual, unfairly," retorted Mrs. Hartley.

Her visitor laughed. "I do so like to hear you defend him. You are thoroughly in earnest on that subject."

"Earnestness is a good quality," said the widow. "It is one in which some of your suitors have been rather deficient."

"None of them, so far as their desire to get my money was concerned, I assure you," Miss Moffat answered, which might be considered as rather a neat little tit in return for Mrs. Hartley's tat.

For a long time after they had separated for the night the latter lady lay awake, thinking over Grace's story, and wondering who could have told her. She recalled all the people she had known at Kingslough, she puzzled her head to imagine who it might be so utterly in Mr. Brady's power as to dread the weight of his vengeance. She tried to remember if Grace had let fall any word likely to give her a clue, but in vain.

"It must be that Hanlon or else Scott—I dare say it was Scott. But, then, Mr. Brady and he could not be bitterer enemies than they are; besides, the address on that letter was written by a person of education. I feel no doubt it was Mr. Hanlon," and then all at once the truth flashed upon her, and she sat up in bed, saying almost out aloud, "It was Nettie, the man's own wife." Even in the darkness Kingslough seemed to rise before her eyes. Kingslough at high noon, with the sun dancing on the sea and a group of pitying friends gathered round a feeble old woman bewailing herself for Nettie, golden-haired Nettie, who had gone out that morning all unsuspecting to meet her fate.

Next morning Mrs. Hartley appeared at breakfast, with signs of sleeplessness around her eyes, and tokens of anxiety on her face.

"I have decided on the course we must take," she said, when they were alone; "but before I speak about it, I want to tell and ask you something."

"I know now from whom you received your information; do not be frightened, for the secret is safe with me, and it is well I do know, for otherwise we might, with the best intentions, have secured a *fiasco*. What I wish to ask is this, Is he aware she is acquainted with this affair?"

"Mrs. Hartley," said Grace quietly, "I must refuse to answer any question in connection with the individual who brought this intelligence to me. I wish it never had been brought. I am the last person in the world on whom such a responsibility should have been thrown."

"I agree with you to a certain extent. I think there are many persons in the world who would have been of more use in such a crisis than yourself. The worst of young heiresses,

even if they have philanthropic impulses and amiable dispositions, is that they are apt to get slightly——"

"Selfish," suggested one of the young heiresses referred to.

"No, I do not mean exactly that; in fact, I am not exactly certain that I could express what I do mean. One thing, however, I must say, making all allowance for the difficulty in which you have been placed,—I think, Miss Grace, you ought to have made some move in the matter ere this; you ought to have told me all about it before you had been twenty-four hours in the house with me. There, I have spoken out my mind and feel better for it. Now are you going to be very angry with me?"

"No indeed," Grace answered; "I like to be scolded, it seems as though some one loved me enough to be interested in me," and she caught Mrs. Hartley's hand and held it for a second. There were unshed tears in the eyes of both. Perhaps the same thought occurred to each at the same moment. They had wealth, and position, friends, acquaintances; they possessed those things deemed valuable by most people; and yet they were lonely creatures, the one in her youth, the other in her age.

"I shall write," said Mrs. Hartley, after a pause, "to Lord Ardmorne, or rather, I shall go to see him—he is in London now; he is so courteous a nobleman, I dare say he would come to see me if I asked him."

"That would be a far better arrangement," remarked Grace. "Your servants here could attach no importance to his visit, but his servants there might."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Hartley, but she gave way nevertheless, and wrote a note forthwith in which she stated she desired to have Lord Ardmorne's advice and assistance, and stating she would send her carriage to meet any train by which he might appoint to travel.

By return of post came his lordship's answer. He should be only too delighted, he said, if his advice and assistance could be of any service to Mrs. Hartley, and he would leave London by such a train on such a day.

"So far well," said the widow; "now we must have a nice luncheon for the dear old man, and you must look your very best. I suppose you are not desirous of adding any other members of the nobility to your list of suitors; bak as penance for your sin of omission, you ought to meut yourself very charming."

"I will try," answered Grace, and she succeeded. Lord Ardmorne was delighted with her.

When, in the pretty drawing-room, Mrs. Hartley repeated all Grace had told her to him, the visitor looked exceedingly grave.

"This thing must not be," he said; "we must save the General from ruin, and keep the estate for the son—a fine, brave, honest fellow. I never did a kindness to any young man whose subsequent career satisfied me so completely. I never receive a letter from India in which his name is not mentioned, and with approval."

Grace felt her colour rise a little at this laudation of a man she had never thought clever or remarkable in any way, and she turned her head away, so that if Mrs. Hartley glanced towards her, she might build no fancy from her face.

But Mrs. Hartley did no such thing. She was much too astute a woman to let Grace imagine she was going to plead John Riley's cause again. She had made up her mind that Miss Moffat and her first lover should marry, but she did not intend to let Grace see her game, or tell her for what stakes she was playing. Mentally, she likened her own position to that of the man who, driving pigs along the road to Cork, told all the people he met that he was proceeding in a contrary direction for fear the animals might immediately turn back.

She had guessed Grace's little peculiarities with tolerable accuracy, and she was determined not to risk damaging her favourite's chance by running counter to them.

From the tone of his letters, she knew no woman had as yet filled up Grace's place in John's heart.

"I wonder if he would still love her if they met. She is beautiful now, which she certainly was not then; but she is not quite the Grace he knew——"

Was she not? Before another twelvemonth has passed, Mrs. Hartley knew of what stuff Grace was made.

"I shall at once write to Mr. Riley, and tell him his presence is urgently required in Ireland."

"But what a pity it seems to do so, when he is getting on so well in India!"

"If he finds affairs in Ireland are able to go on without him, he can return to India; I will arrange all that."

"But it would be dangerous to wait for his return before making any move in the matter," suggested Mrs. Hartley.

"I shall not wait for anything or person," was the reply; "I shall ascertain if the statement be true—no reflection intended, Miss Moffat, on your sagacity; this can be done through the General's lawyers."

"And then?" suggested Mrs. Hartley.

"Then I shall begin to be perplexed. I do not suppose, if the interest were regularly settled, there would be any necessity to pay off the mortgage, but still I think it will have to be paid off, and if so, where is the money to come from? It is not given to every one to command capital as Mr. Brady seems able to do. I have been buying an estate lately in one of the Midland counties, and it has made me very short—very short indeed. But bless me! to think of Brady aspiring to Woodbrook! No matter at what sacrifice, that must be prevented. A place I would gladly own myself."

"All my money is invested," said Mrs. Hartley. "I am afraid I could not realize any considerable sum for a long time."

"I have not the slightest idea where my money is," added Miss Moffat; "but if any of it is available, I should like to help."

"Not to be thought of," suggested Mrs. Hartley. "I am sure Lord Ardmorne agrees with me when I say the idea ought not to be entertained for a moment."

"I really am at a loss——" began the nobleman.

"If you are sensitive, Grace, you can leave us," said Mrs. Hartley; "if not, you can hear what I say. There was a time, my lord, when this young lady's fortune would have infused new blood into the Woodbrook estate, when a very honourable and honest young gentleman who was very fond of her asked her to be his wife. But she could not fancy him. It was a pity; still such things will happen. Without further explanation, you will see at once that if Miss Moffat stepped forward at this juncture to offer assistance, her feelings and motives might be misconstrued. Her views have undergone no change, but it might be imagined they had."

Grace sat chafing in her place, whilst Mrs. Hartley delivered herself of this long sentence, but she did not speak. Lord Ardmorne, after studying the pattern of the carpet for a moment or two, looked up and said with a twinkle in his kindly eyes,—

"Yes, I agree with you, though it does seem hard a young

lady should be unable to help a friend because his son was once her suitor. The difficulties are boulders in the path of life, but still we must all face them. If, however, I am not greatly mistaken in Miss Moffat, she is one of those who are given——

> "To do good by stealth,
> And blush to find it fame,"

and, supposing money be urgently needed, I fancy she would lend it to me and let me take the credit of helping the General and his family at this crisis: You would trust me, Miss Moffat, to take as much care of your pride as I should of your fortune?"

Said Grace—"My lord, I would trust you with my life," and passed out into the conservatory, thinking that if the Glendares had been made of such stuff as this, it would have seemed a glorious lot to link her fortune with that of Robert Somerford—even although the ways and doings of the nobility are not as the ways and doings of the class from which she sprung.

"A most charming girl!" exclaimed Lord Ardmorne, "and the case was, as you implied, serious!"

"Yes; John Riley loved Grace Moffat, as a girl is only liked once in her lifetime. That was why he went abroad, that is why he stays abroad, that is probably the reason why he will remain single till he is middle-aged and rich. You have seen the young lady who is 'the woman' of that man's life."

"I fancy your story ought to end, however, Mrs. Hartley, with—they lived happy ever after."

But Mrs. Hartley shook her head. Not even to this new ally did she intend to show her hand.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ALMOST TOO LATE.

Lord Ardmorne was as good as his word, and better; thereby demonstrating the truth of the frequent assertion, that those who promise little often perform much; while those who promise much usually fail altogether in performing.

Not in the least like the Somerfords was the Marquis of

Ardmorne. He was not handsome in person or gracious in manner, or fluent of speech, but he was true; true in his prejudices, which were many; in his political faith, which was becoming obnoxious even in England; in his religion, that generally condemned all men—but was so in the habit of excepting special persons and cases that the damnatory clauses were practically rendered innocuous.

From what stock shall we say such a man sprang. He was not Scotch, or Irish, or English; but he was something which we are accustomed—though as I think, erroneously—to regard as a mixture of all three. He was what the tenants called a hard landlord, and yet his rents were lower than those of the Glendares.

Politically, the Glendares were on the right side to please the people. He was on the wrong; and the "hard bit," as the tenantry called it, about Lord Ardmorne was that when a man took a farm from him he had the choice of voting as his landlord wished, of thinking as his landlord thought, or of having worldly matters made uncomfortable for him.

To ensure so desirable a state of affairs, Lord Ardmorne granted no fresh leases; but let his lands at a proportionately low rental, so as to be able to rid his farms of recalcitrant tenants as rapidly as might be.

I do not defend the system. Of course amongst a people so highly enlightened as our own—in a state of society which produces such profound thinkers, and renders the views of even the lowest so clear and so just, as that which recommends itself at present—it is most desirable the freedom of action and of conscience should obtain, even if such freedom of action and of conscience produce similar results to those England and Ireland have both had to deplore during the last few years; but still those who took Lord Ardmorne's farms did so with a perfect knowledge of consequences.

There was no secrecy about the matter. My lord having a certain set of opinions, expected his tenants to acquiesce in those opinions; and they were aware of the fact.

When by reason of death—the resignation of a member, or other causes—an election took place, Lord Ardmorne expected his men to vote for his man. If they refused to do so, my lord turned them out. They rented his land, knowing well the full consequences of contumacy, and if they liked to risk those consequences, it was scarcely fair to grumble (as

they did) when the marquis enforced his share of the bargain.

If an Irish farmer of that period could only live a struggling trader for a year in the city of London, in this, he might well pray heaven to deliver him from the men of our time, and to restore him even a hard landlord like the marquis, who expected his tenantry to think as he thought for the sake of an exceptionally low rental and various other indulgences beside.

The Marquis of Ardmorne would have found scant favour at the hands of those gentlemen of the press who, in the present day, are good enough to instruct the nobility in their duties as landlords and landowners. He was in no way romantic. He might have forgiven a tenant a year's rent, but he could not overlook his venturing to have an opinion of his own.

His manners were not genial; he could not, to reproduce an old Irish phrase, have "charmed a bird off the bush," even if he had tried to do so. He was one of those who, it is sometimes stated, strive to stop progress. His own party honestly thought they were only the breakwaters that tended to keep the perilous waves of innovation from sweeping over and destroying the land.

The Reform Bill he believed to have been the ruin of the country. Had he lived to see the Irish Church Bill passed, he would have covered his face and turned him to the wall, feeling death had lingered too long. Tenant right stank in his nostrils. Liberty of conscience was a phrase which sounded in his ears like the claptrap expression of a party who were trying to lead the lower orders astray.

The peasantry he regarded as children who, not knowing what was best for them, ought to do as they were told. There could be no mistake as to what Lord Ardmorne considered the first duty of a tenant-farmer; and if the tenant-farmer chanced to entertain a different opinion, why so much the worse for him.

On the other hand, the Ardmorne tenantry enjoyed advantages unknown to those who rented the Somerford lands. The marquis, it is true, did little or nothing in the way of improvements; but he did not prevent the farmers improving their holdings if they pleased to do so. Lime and stone were supplied to them at almost nominal prices. The shore rights, such as the Glendares had let and the lessee sublet

again, were practically free to those who, behaving themselves properly, were suffered to cultivate his lordship's lands and pay rent to his lordship's agent; and when crops failed or sickness laid low, and the gale days came round, time would often be given to make up that rent for which, as on the Glendare estates, the farmers and their wives, and their sons and daughters, and men-servants and maid-servants, worked from morning till night from week's beginning to week's end, from the time they were big enough to pick up stones and herd cows till they were carried to their graves.

Nevertheless, the marquis was not liked as Th' Airl had been. Though his religious opinions were identical with their own; though he reverenced the glorious, pious, and immortal memory of King William; though he had nothing but contempt and hatred for that of James; though he was an Orangeman, and thought "Protestant Boys" the most charming melody ever composed; though his watchword, like theirs, was "No Surrender;" though his feelings towards the Pope were identical with their own sentiments, despite the fact that he uttered his commination services in Parliament in more orthodox and gentlemanly fashion than they shouted out theirs in the streets and highways,—still, his lordship failed to win the hearts of his people.

He had always been a grave quiet man, with stern features and reserved habits; a man with a story in his life which had perhaps made the fulfilment of his age different from the promise of his youth; a man of strong purposes and deep feelings; a man to like few, but to like those few much; a man who would have thought himself no better than a thief, if he had left impoverished acres and a diminished rent-roll to the next heir, albeit that heir was neither son nor nephew, nor aught but a distant relative who held a high position in India.

It was to this relative he had sent out John Riley, and the young man might pecuniarily have done well for himself in his new appointment, had he not commenced sending home all he could spare in order to enable his family to live more comfortably.

He would have done them a greater kindness had he kept his money. To persons who have always been short, the command of a little money is great snare as well as to those who have never had much experience in spending; so at least it proved with Mrs. Riley.

She had been compelled to do without so many things during the previous part of her life, that now when a few of them were within her reach she tried to compass all; and the result proved that not only was the Indian allowance spent, but the interest on the mortgage fell into arrear.

"When the girls are married, we can soon retrench," Mrs. Riley observed, but the girls failed to marry. If they had not done so when they lived quietly and dressed plainly, and engaged themselves in those various works of a domestic kind which recommend young ladies to men of a prudent and economical turn of mind, they were certainly likely to remain unwedded when, arrayed in gorgeous attire they were met at parties and balls in Dublin, where it was their new custom to winter.

They never lacked partners, and they never were destitute of attendant swains, who found Woodbrook a pleasant sort of house at which to stay for a week or two in the summer and autumn; but although the hopes of Mrs. Riley were often excited, they always ended in disappointment. Visitors they had in abundance, but suitors none; till at length Lucy captivated a curate, whose addition to the finances of the family proved seventy pounds a year from his rector, twenty-five pounds a year from private sources, and a baronet uncle.

"Who will be certain to present him with a good living," said Mrs. Riley; though on what foundation she erected this pleasing superstructure was an inscrutable mystery to all her friends.

Things were in this state when Lord Ardmorne through his solicitors ascertained, first, that if Mr. Brady did not actually hold the mortgage he was intimately and pecuniarily associated with those who did, and that it was in his power to pull the strings which prompted the movements of the ostensible actors: second, that the interest was running back; third, that the mortgage deed contained some unusual and stringent covenants; fourth, that the Woodbrook estates were not returning the amount of money they had once done; and fifth, that owing to failing health, the pressure of anxiety, and the more exciting life he had in the interests of his daughters been leading, the General was becoming daily less and less competent to act as his own agent and to manage his own affairs.

Altogether the family prospects were in as deplorable a state as family prospects could be, when Lord Ardmorne's solicitor

went to confer with General Riley's legal adviser and General Riley himself.

It was from the latter gentleman that information of the interest having fallen behind was elicited.

Not being pressed for it, he, as frequently happens in such cases, had not mentioned the matter to those who would have advised him to make any sacrifice in order to keep so important an affair within manageable limits.

Piteously he confessed his error, and asked, as people are in the habit of asking when counsel is almost useless, what he was to do.

It had been agreed between Lord Ardmorne and the lawyers that, in consideration of his broken health and other causes, the fact of Mr. Brady having managed to thrust his fingers into the Riley pie should not be mentioned to the General; that if a settlement of the matter could be left until the son's return, all explanations should be deferred till he came back.

The first thing to be done was clearly to wipe off the arrears of interest; but as not an acre of the Woodbrook estate was free, General Riley's solicitors said openly that they failed to see where the money was to come from.

Lord Ardmorne, however, having taken up the affair, was not going to let this difficulty stop him on the very threshold of his undertaking, and instructed his lawyer to find the amount necessary.

He did not intend to be harsh to the General, but he did tell the old man some very plain truths concerning the risk he had run of jeopardizing his son's inheritance; and he made a point of seeing Mrs. Riley, then in Dublin, and explaining to her that the old life of paring and pinching would have to be resumed if she did not wish Woodbrook to pass into the hands of strangers.

"It is all that girl's doing," groaned the poor murmuring lady. "But for her we should have been comfortable and happy years and years ago."

Which remark set the marquis thinking. John was a fine fellow, and, spite his encumbered acres, not an ineligible *parti* even for Grace Moffat; but he failed to see how the little romance he had planned could be carried out if Mrs. Riley were to be one of the *dramatis personæ*.

The lapse of years had not improved the General's wife. Lord Ardmorne could imagine many more desirable things

than a close relationship with her, and he left the house thinking matters were complicating a little, and that perhaps he should not be justified in dragging Miss Moffat into the Riley entanglement.

"Perhaps the very best thing the young man could do would be to persuade his father to sell the estate right out and go back to India. That, however, will be a matter for future discussion and consideration. Meantime, we can do nothing but clear off the arrears of interest."

In this, however, his lordship proved to be mistaken. No sooner was the interest settled than notice was served requiring the repayment of the principal at the extremely short date mentioned in the deed.

Like most of his countrymen, Lord Ardmorne had a passion for acquiring land. A townland for sale, an estate in the market, these things affected him as the news that a rare picture is to be brought to the hammer affects a collector, and Woodbrook was a property he would have felt by no means loth to add to those he already possessed.

But the knowledge of this desire tied his tongue. In the General's extremity he could not advise him to let the encumbered acres be purchased by some one willing and able to give enough for them to clear off the mortgage and leave a margin beside.

Had he stepped in at this point and counselled the General to do that which really seemed the only rational way of solving the difficulty, he would not have cared to meet the man for whose return he had written.

"I fancy it will have to come to that in the end," he said to his solicitor in reply to a remark from that gentleman, that the sooner Woodbrook passed into other hands the better it would be for every one, the General included, "but we must leave it for the son to decide."

"I do not exactly see how the decision is to be left for so long a time," remarked the lawyer. "There can be no question it is all a planned affair, and how any man's adviser could permit such a deed to be signed baffles my comprehension."

"Well, you must remember when a state of mortgage becomes chronic," said the marquis, "people are apt to overlook symptoms that would strike a person to whom the disease is new. Besides which there was no choice as I imagine in the matter. An old mortgage had to be paid off,

and under such circumstances it is not always easy for a man to dictate his own terms."

To which words of wisdom, coming from a nobleman, the lawyer listened with deference and attention as in duty bound; but he held naturally to his own opinion nevertheless.

Here, then, the Rileys had arrived at a point where two roads met, and written on the finger-post in letters plain enough to those who could read were the words—To Ruin.

Where the other road led was not so clearly indicated. It puzzled Lord Ardmorne himself, though both long and clear-headed, to imagine what the end of it all would be. He could turn them out of the direct route to beggary, and he meant to do so, but whether the second path might not merely prove a round-about-way to the same end he was not prepared to assert.

After all there is nothing on earth so difficult as to manage another man's affairs for him, even if he be willing to let his neighbour attempt the almost impossible feat.

But about the end, Lord Ardmorne did not mean to trouble himself till John Riley's return. When that event happened, he proposed to lay the whole difficulty of the position before the younger man, and warn him against attempting to drag an endless chain of debt through yet another generation. Meantime arrangements must be made for paying off the existing mortgage; and when he had done all he could in the matter—and with a solvent nobleman and in Ireland that all was considerable,—Lord Ardmorne found a pecuniary deficiency still existed that, although not large in itself, was still sufficiently great to cause perplexity and difficulty.

Up to this point he had decided not to permit Grace to moil or meddle in the matter, now he decided to leave her to say whether she would help or not.

"I will take care she is no loser," he said to himself, "and also that she does not appear in the transaction. I certainly will buy the place if the father and son agree to sell; if not I must arrange differently, that is all. So now to see Miss Moffat, and ascertain whether she is still willing to assist in saving an old family from utter worldly ruin."

Very straightforwardly he put the state of the case before "the woman of John Riley's life," told her what he had done, and the precise way in which she could best help, that help being kept a secret between herself, himself, and Mrs.

Hartley; and if the subsequent conversation were rendered less connected by reason of the widow's comments on the folly of Mrs. Riley and the childish weakness of her husband, her remarks tended at least to make it more exciting.

"I should like to be of use to the General or his son," Grace said with a frankness which caused Mrs. Hartley to shake for the ultimate success of her project; "indeed, I should like to serve any of them. It would be a sad thing if for lack of a friendly hand Mrs. Riley and the girls had to leave Woodbrook."

"It is clearly Lord Ardmorne's opinion that the sooner they leave Woodbrook the better for all concerned," observed Mrs. Hartley. "And in that opinion I entirely agree. If all the poor Irish gentry were compelled to sell their estates, and let people who have money and sense purchase them, it would be a grand thing for the country."

"English people seem to think there is a necessary connection between money and sense. I must say I fail to see the link myself," answered Grace.

"I am inclined, however, to think the English capacity to make and to keep money implies a considerable amount of sense," interposed Lord Ardmorne.

"It is not a pleasant sort of sense," persisted Grace.

"Perhaps not, but it is useful, my dear," said Mrs. Hartley. "For instance, had your grandfather squandered the fortune he made instead of leaving it to you, he might have been a more popular old gentleman, but he could scarcely have proved himself so admirable a person in his domestic relations as was the case."

"I sometimes wish he had never left me a penny," remarked Grace a little bitterly.

"What a shame for you to make such a remark, Miss Moffat, at a time when your fortune enables you to step forward to the rescue of your old friends," exclaimed Lord Ardmorne, with an affectation of playful raillery which sat upon him about as gracefully as a cap and bells might have done.

"Yes, it is a shame," Grace answered quietly; "for about the first time in my life I feel really thankful now that I am as rich as I am."

"Many other opportunities for thankfulness from the same cause will present themselves in the years to come, believe me," said their visitor.

"I only hope they may not have to leave Woodbrook," exclaimed Miss Moffat, a little irrelevantly to the conversation as it seemed.

"Then you ought not to hope anything of the kind," rebuked Mrs. Hartley. "You should hope that John may have enough resolution and sufficient sense to free himself and his family from the incubus of debt, that must have made existence a daily and hourly torture and humiliation to the whole of them. As I said before, if a law were passed compelling the owners of heavily mortgaged properties to sell them, there might be a chance of Ireland's regeneration. As matters stand there is none."

If with prophetic eye Mrs. Hartley had been able to look forward a very little way, how she would have longed for the Encumbered Estates Court, and welcomed the changes every one predicted must be wrought by it.

In those days capital and civilization were the favourite panaceas the English proposed for all Irish troubles. In these the same remedies are indirectly suggested, but the English are now quite content to leave their sister to find both for herself.

And no doubt the present course is the correct one. The curse of all former administrations has been that instead of leaving Ireland's diseases to be cured by time and nature, each fresh political doctor has thought it necessary to try his own new course of treatment on the patient.

Fortunately the latest and rashest surgeon who has experimented on her so far as to cut away the grievance most bitterly complained of, has discovered there may be a tendency to hysteria in the constitution of a nation as well as of a woman, and that it does not follow because a cry is raised, "The pain is here," that the arm or leg is to be hacked off with impunity. One man has deprived Ireland of that which kings, nor queens, nor parliament, nor statesman, can ever restore to her again. Nevertheless, he may have done both England and Ireland good service, for it will be some time before the former is tempted to try the result of another such surgical operation, let the latter cry for knife and caustic as loud and as long as she will.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MR. BRADY'S EX-PROJECTS.

When Mr. Brady found the Rileys had by accident or design checkmated him, he was, as a young clerk who chanced to be favoured with many of his inquiries about that period, remarked, "Neither to hold nor to bind."

To ruin the Rileys, to oust the proud beggars—so he styled them—out of Woodbrook, to bring the old man to his level, and to humble the pride of "that fellow out in India," had been the dearest desires of his heart for years previously.

In order to compass them he had not spared his time or trouble; he had not objected to wade through very dirty water, he had not grumbled when asked to eat humble pie in quantity; he had not bemoaned himself when compelled to cringe to people he longed to kick, or be civil to those he hated; and now in a moment all he had saved, toiled, lived for was snatched from his grasp.

When a man first conceives the plot of either a good or a bad project it is, comparatively speaking, a small matter to find another has forestalled him in its execution. Let him, however, have nursed, tended, perfected the scheme, lain with it in his bosom at night, and taken it for his companion by day, he finds it a cruel hardship to have the one thing he fancied his own, the one good he asked in life, claimed by another.

If the punishment of deliberate wrong-doing ever could enlist our sympathies on behalf of the wrong-doer, I think it might be in a case like this, when a man having spent his all to compass his object finds at the last that it eludes his grasp; when having staked everything he possesses on the success of some villanous trick in the game of life, his intended victim, at a moment least expected, says "Checkmate," and leaves him to curse the board whereon his best designs, his longest-matured schemes, have been defeated.

On Mr. Brady the news of his enemy being at the last moment delivered out of his hands, fell with such a shock that at first he could not realize the depth of his own disap-

pointment. Although the interest being paid might have prepared him for the settlement of the principal, he refused to believe his lawyers when they told him the whole amount had by some means been raised.

To incredulity succeeded all the fury of a balked revenge, and in his rage he accused both solicitors and capitalist with having conspired in General Riley's favour against himself. He declared it was through them the owner of Woodbrook had heard of his own interest in the matter, to which the former replied by ordering him out of their office, and the latter remarked that if Mr. Brady did not put some restraint upon his tongue all transactions must end between them.

"I am willing to make some allowance for you," he went on, "as I dare say the matter is as great a blow to you as it has proved a surprise to me; but I will not have such language as you used just now addressed to me by any man living; so you can take your choice, either try to be civil, or else I will have done with you and your affairs at once and for ever."

Whereupon Mr. Brady muttered something intended for an apology, adding in a louder tone,—

"If I only knew who has been meddling in my affairs I would make it pleasant. He would think twice before thrusting himself into other people's business, I can tell him!"

"Well, when you find out who it is that has upset your plans, you can tell him what you like, so far as I am concerned; but, meantime, I will not have you vent your temper on me. Remember that for the future, sir, if you please."

Whether it pleased him or not, Mr. Brady knew he must remember the hint, and act upon it; and, therefore, set his face homeward full of anger and mortification.

This was the first severe check his plans had ever received, and in proportion to the magnitude of the venture appeared the shock of his failure.

Independent altogether of his desire to beggar and humble a family he hated, Mr. Brady had looked upon Woodbrook as the El Dorado whence he should in the future dig fortune and position. He and his friend (who, so far as disposition and character were concerned, might be considered a not unworthy match-horse even to Mr. Brady), had long previously laid their plans, not merely for the acquisition of Woodbrook, but also how they intended to make that acquisition valuable to them.

It had been proposed by Mr. Brady's coadjutor to give that gentleman a share of the profits, in consideration of his fertile brain having devised the scheme, and of his unwearying industry being necessary to carry it to success.

Mr. Brady's idea, on the other hand, was by degrees to work the capitalist out. He had not decided how the feat was to be performed, but he was well aware that it would be an extremely good thing for him if he could manage to get the whole power into his own hands.

In the first instance he would require assistance, and that to a large extent, but he did not despair of finding himself ultimately the owner of, at all events, a large portion of the property.

Money and revenge—these two desirable things he hoped to compass at a single blow—and now the castle of his dreams, the fairy palace which he had mentally erected from foundation to lofty pinnacle, was level with the dust.

He had been beaten, and by the Rileys. Whoever else might realize the project he had been perfecting for years, Mr. Daniel Brady should reap no advantage from it.

About the time when he first began to think of annexing Woodbrook, "going to the salt water for the benefit of sea bathing" was becoming a recognized necessity even amongst those who had never previously thought of permitting their families such an indulgence.

From inland rural districts, as well as from the towns great and small, people came trooping for that "month at the shore," which it was believed made weakly children strong, and kept healthy children strong and robust.

Each summer Kingslough was crowded by visitors. Poor cottages—no matter how small or poor, provided they were situated close on the bay—were eagerly taken by those to whom economy was an object; and it must have been plain even to a much less intelligent gentleman than Mr. Brady that, if the accommodation in Kingslough and its neighbourhood had been twice as great, willing guests might still be found to avail themselves of it.

So far, however, no one had thought of building houses solely and simply for the benefit of season residents, and it was by a plan of this kind Mr. Brady hoped to make Woodbrook pay.

Part of the property stretched down to the sea. The water at that distance from Kingslough was represented better for

bathing than that which washed the grey shore below Ballylough Abbey. The beach was of finer sand, a headland stretched out into the sea sufficiently far to suggest the idea of erecting a quay, at which steamers could anchor at almost all conditions of the tide. The scenery was wilder and more beautiful than that surrounding Kingslough. Already there was a talk of a short sea route being inaugurated not merely between Scotland and Ireland, but between England and Ireland; and Mr. Brady, though he did not erect his castle on the strength of either English or Scotch money, considered it quite on the cards that from the great manufacturing towns in Lancashire, and even from Glasgow, people might come to spend the summer at Glendare.

That was the name he proposed to confer on the new watering-place, not because he was especially fond of the Glendares, but because he considered the title one likely to recommend itself to natives and foreigners alike. He had seen enough of English people to understand the horror which seizes them at sight or sound of a long Irish name, such as Ballinascraw, for instance; on the other hand, he knew the inhabitants of the Green Isle still retained a preference for words indigenous to the soil.

The fashion of wiping out old landmarks, by rechristening romantic spots with prosaic British names, had not then begun, and he would indeed have been considered an adventurous man—adventurous to madness—who founding a settlement on the other side of the Channel, blew the trumpets and assembled the people to hear the town christened Piccadilly, Kensington, or Wandsworth, as is the case at present.

Mr. Brady therefore decided on Glendare, as a name likely to wear well and find favour in the minds of the multitude. Lying idly on his oars, looking with his bodily eyes at the land dotted with trees, sloping so lovingly to the beach,—his mental sight beheld villas filling up the landscape, snug cottages scattered along the shore, a town perhaps climbing up the sides of the headland. The vision grew more real every day. He had drawn his plans, he had decided from which quarry stone should be carted; he had thought how much money he could himself afford as a beginning, how much and at what rate he could raise to complete the scheme; pleasure-boats in imagination he saw drawn up on the shore, small gardens filled with flowers, lawns on which walked ladies gaily dressed,—gentlemen rich enough to pay long

rents for convenient, comfortably furnished houses. There was not another property so suitable for the purpose as Woodbrook in all that part of the country; and the beauty of it was that, whilst those few acres by the sea could be so admirably utilized, the domain itself might remain almost intact, the farms still be left as they were, the former tenants still permitted to pay rents to new owners.

And all the while unconscious of the evil-eye coveting his home, his lands, his son's inheritance, General Riley pursued his way, never imagining beggary was coming to him as fast as the feet of misfortune could bring it.

Lulled into a state of fancied security—suspecting no trick, thinking of no worse trouble in the future than a day when the arrears would have to be paid—the old man was, by reason of utter ignorance, and, it may be, natural carelessness, drifting on rocks from which his ship could never have been hindered breaking to pieces,—when he was saved as by a miracle.

What would be the ultimate end it might have puzzled a wiser than the General to say, but for a time, at least, Woodbrook was though not out of debt, out of danger. Every one connected with the matter felt nothing more could be done in the affair till John came home.

Meantime it oozed out, as indeed no one strove to prevent the story doing, that Mr. Brady and his friend had laid a deliberate trap for the General, and people began to say some very hard things about the master of Maryville in consequence; all the sins of his youth and his manhood were rehearsed, as sins will be on such occasions; all the wrong he had done in his lifetime, all the right he had left undone, all his errors of omission and commission, all his subterfuges and tricks, his faults social and domestic, the grief he had caused to many an honest father and mother; these things and others like them were disinterred from the always open grave of the past, and discussed alike in mansion and cottage in the town of Kingslough, and in other towns, besides in the country districts throughout all that part.

After a fashion, he had, up to this time, been making way with his fellows. His wife was not visited by any lady higher in rank than the wife of the minister who preached at the barn-like little meeting-house a couple of miles or so from Maryville, but men of a better class, though of a bad way of living, did not object to be seen in Mr. Brady's

company, and were willing to drink, smoke, make small bets and play cards with him, not merely at various hotels and inns in Kingslough and the other towns, but at his own house.

Now there came a change, nameless, perhaps, but certain. There was no direct cut, no absolute incivility, no alteration in manner of which it was possible to take notice, but his former acquaintances were always in a hurry when he met them, always had an engagement, always had to meet some one or go somewhere, and rarely now could find time to spend an hour or two in the evening at Maryville.

After all it was not right, these men opined, to have tried to drive the old General out of Woodbrook. The line must be drawn somewhere, and Kingslough drew it at that point which Mr. Brady had tried to cross.

Kingslough considered he ought to have refrained from meddling with a gentleman. Nothing could have revealed so certainly the taint in Mr. Brady's blood as an attempt of such a nature. The marquis went up at once in public estimation. Many persons who had long been wishing to change their political creed, since Radical notions had begun to make Liberalism rather the creed of the vulgar, took that opportunity of turning their coats.

"It was a very fine thing of Ardmorne to do," said Kingslough, Kilcurragh, Glenwellan, and the neighbouring districts. He had gone with General Riley to the Bank of Ireland himself, it was stated; he had found the extra money required beyond what the bank would advance. He had written to request Mr. John Riley's presence, and arranged that his prospects should not suffer in consequence. In a time of trouble he had proved more than a friend, and then it was so clever of him to have found out that danger menaced the Rileys, and of what nature.

Of course, some one must have given him a clue, but he followed it up to the last inch of thread. Then came the question, who could have hinted the matter to him?

Conjecture, which it is never possible to balk, guessed every likely and unlikely person in the county. Rumour, which is the readiest inventor of fiction on earth, prepared a score of circumstantial tales on the subject, and ran them through society with as much regularity as any other serial writer might.

On the whole, public opinion inclined to the belief that

Mr. Dillwyn was the person who had opened Lord Ardmorne's eyes. It was well known that when the new earl succeeded to the title, Mr. Brady had taken a journey in order to malign Mr. Dillwyn, and secure the agency for himself, and so much unpleasantness had in consequence arisen that Mr. Somerford's step-father actually did resign, offered on certain conditions to vacate Rosemont, and expressed his opinion of Mr. Brady and the Glendares in language as remarkable for its force as its plainness.

It was only at the earl's earnest entreaty he continued to act until another agent could be found.

"And that other agent will not be Mr. Daniel Brady in this earl's time," said Mr. Dillwyn triumphantly, on his return from foreign travel—which remark clearly proved that the feelings he entertained towards the owner of Maryville were not strictly Christian in their nature.

Society at Kingslough had for so long a time been accustomed to disagreements between the Glendares and their agents, that it had paid comparatively little attention to this last dispute, except to marvel whether Mr. Dillwyn would really go, and if so who would step into his shoes. But now when every one was anxious to know who it was that enlightened Lord Ardmorne, the passage between the agent and Mr. Brady was remembered, and a certain significance attached to it.

In a word, though rumour invented and circulated fifty stories, this was the one to which people, as a rule, inclined. Mr. Brady himself was perhaps the only person who attached no importance to it. As at first, he believed that either his own or his friend's lawyer, or his friend himself, had proved unfaithful; so at last he believed that one or the other of the persons with whom he was most closely connected by ties of interest had—by imprudence or of *malice prepense*—betrayed his plans.

No one else, he was positive, had the faintest knowledge of them. By intuition Mr. Dillwyn could not have guessed his tactics, and it mattered little who it was that had finally carried the news to Lord Ardmorne, when once the secret escaped from the custody of those who ought to have held it secure.

To discover the person who originally betrayed it suddenly became the most paramount business of Mr. Brady's life, and Nettie often wondered to herself whether the best thing

she could do might not be to run away to the uttermost ends of the earth, taking the children with her.

"For if he ever finds it out he certainly will kill me," thought the wretched woman, and she thenceforth lived in a constant agony of fright. After all, no matter how tired a person may be of the business of existence, one would like to have a choice as to the mode of getting rid of the toil and the sorrow; and perhaps the most repulsive way of having the trouble ended seems that of being murdered.

There had been times when Nettie felt tempted to bring matters to a conclusion for herself—and that method of shortening the weary day now seemed luxurious by comparison with any termination which involved the ceremony of *un mauvais quart d'heure* with Mr. Brady as an essential preliminary.

So far as affairs at the Castle Farm were concerned, General Riley's business took precedence of Amos Scott's. Having quarrelled with his own solicitors, Mr. Brady had to carry the Scott difficulty elsewhere. Out, Mr. Brady was determined the farmer, the wife, and the children should go; but short of pulling the house down about their ears, there seemed no possibility of getting rid of them; and for all his braggart airs, he was not prepared to take a step of that kind if he could avoid doing so.

That rough-and ready method of ejectment, which found such favour in the south and west, never recommended itself to the northern understanding. The thing has been done, of course: the roofs have been stripped off; the windows taken out; the doors torn from their hinges; in extreme cases the very walls undermined, and the house razed with the ground; but patient as the northern temperament is, I doubt if a landlord could enjoy much ease of mind supposing he saw a man like Amos Scott sitting by his naked hearth —with the heavens for his rooftree, and the wind and the rain blowing and beating on his head.

Upon the whole, supposing imagination presented the picture of such a reality, the landlord's dreams—let right be on his side or wrong—would be of coffins and of a violent exit into that other world where all the vexed questions of this will—as we fondly hope—be settled to the satisfaction of the poor, the oppressed, the broken-hearted.

Curious to say, although Mr. Brady was a bully he was not also a coward; which seems as inconsistent a statement

as to say a negro is not black. Nevertheless, it is the truth. The man was not destitute of physical courage. He had writhed mentally under the taunts hurled at him by the Rileys; but he would not have feared a stand-up fight with the son—a hand to hand struggle, with liberty given to each to kill if he were able.

Nevertheless, Mr. Brady had gone almost as far with the Scotts as he cared to do. He had dug their potatoes and sold them, cut the grass and saved it, reaped the corn and carried it, sown the land with seed, that was again hastening to fruition; but beyond this he hesitated to go. The law must do the rest, he said; but spite of the fact of justice being on his side, he found the law liked the task of turning Amos Scott out on the world rather less than he did.

When a bailiff came to take possession of the household gods, gathered together carefully, anxiously, in the first part of the Scotts' married life, he was received by husband and wife, one armed with a blunderbuss and the other with a pike, a relic of ninety-eight.

"Honest man," said Amos, miscalling him in an access of civility, "honest man, if ye want to sit down to rest ye're kindly welcome; if ye want bite or sup, we can give ye share of what we have ourselves, water and a meal bannock; but if ye lay a finger on anything in this house and claim for that devil Brady I'll shoot ye dead. I've made up my mind to slay the first who meddles with the inside of that half-door, so if anything happens your blood will be upon your own head, not upon mine."

The result of which speech was that the man neither stopped nor took breath till he found himself in Kingslough again. There was a steady light in Scott's eye, and a suggestiveness about the way in which he kept his finger on the trigger, ill-calculated to make visiting at the Castle Farm pleasant to a person of the bailiff's profession.

Afterwards Amos declared "He only meant to fear the man;" but if this were so his sport was sufficiently like earnest to carry conviction with it.

Matters had arrived at this pass: in a word, people whispered Scott was dangerous and that Mr. Brady went armed. Further, popular sympathy was with Scott, and the very ballad singers had long slips of badly printed doggrel reciting the doings of Mr. Daniel Brady from his youth upwards, and enlarging upon the fact not only of his having

"decoyed a lovely maiden to a land beyond the seas," but of his trying subsequently

> "To cajole a gallant gentleman,
> And leave his son so poor."

Some kind friend managed that Nettie should be favoured with a sight of one of these precious productions.

"If he kills me one day they will sing all about that through the streets," she thought with a shiver.

Blue eyes and golden hair, what a day's work you wrought when in the bright sunshine you went away with Daniel Brady, trusting the whole future of your young life in his hands!

CHAPTER XXIX.

KINGSLOUGH IS PLACARDED.

Public opinion is treacherous and unmanageable as the sea. One hour a man is sitting high and dry watching the waves encircle some far away object; the next he beholds them hurrying in to engulf himself.

Once the tide sets against any person, it increases in volume and strength every moment, but there are no precise means of knowing when it will turn in this manner, or of telling why it has done so.

Fast as they could flow, the waters of popular dissatisfaction were running against Mr. Brady.

At a local meeting held at Glenwellan, which he had the courage or the hardihood to attend, he was hissed, whilst General Riley's appearance proved the signal for loud and prolonged applause.

Some who were sufficiently indifferent to both men to be able to observe accurately, reported that Mr. Brady turned white to the lips at a display of feeling so decided and so unexpected; and this is sufficiently probable, since those who are the most ready to defy the opinion of their fellows are the least willing to put up with the consequences such defiance usually entails.

Be this as it may, Mr. Brady a few days later was not greatly surprised when on offering to transfer his business to a more scrupulous firm of solicitors than those to whom he

had previously entrusted the conduct of his difficulties, the proposal was courteously but firmly declined.

"I shall live it down," thought Mr. Brady as he strode out of the office, his hat crushed a little over his brows.

He had said the same thing before, and he had done it; but after all, each year in a man's age, each upward step he has climbed, render that "living down" a more difficult business to perform.

It is impossible to go on having a leg broken and reset without becoming slightly a cripple, and it is more impossible still that a character shall go through a blackening process time after time and come out white in the end.

Mr. Brady had set himself a harder task than he imagined when he talked of living down the effects of his latest error, and if he did not know this Nettie did; Nettie who, hearing all that was going on, having read those ballads which found swift sale at the somewhat high price of one halfpenny each, having seen the "dour" looks cast on her husband in the barn-like meeting-house, ventured to ask him if he did not think it would be better to sell all they possessed and remove to another part of the country.

Whereupon, he turned with passionate fury, with the mad anger of a brutal nature, addressing the only person who was completely hopelessly in his power, and reproached her with having been the curse of his life, the ruin of his prospects, the sole cause of every misfortune that had befallen him.

"I wish to God I had never set eyes on you," he said. "If I must be such a fool as to marry, I ought to have married some one who would have been a help instead of a burden, a woman capable of doing something besides bringing a tribe of fretful, delicate children into the world."

"You ought to have married a woman, Daniel Brady," answered Nettie calmly, "who the first blow you gave her would have had you up before the magistrate and punished for it."

"None of your insolence or it will be worse for you," he interrupted.

"Who," continued Nettie, shrinking a little with a physical terror which had become habitual, "would have insisted on having things suitable for herself and her children, and who, if you had not provided them would have left you."

"Perhaps you are thinking of doing something of the kind," he suggested with the demon which was in him looking threateningly out of his eyes.

"No," she said wearily; "I do not care about anything for myself now, it was only for the children's sake I spoke; only to get them away from a place where their father's sins are sung through the streets, where——"

He did not let her finish the sentence. He struck her down where she stood, and with a parting piece of advice to "keep a quieter tongue in her head or it would be worse for her and her brats too," left the room, banging the door after him.

There was nothing in this so particularly new as to astonish Nettie. She was not much hurt, but as she raised herself slowly to a sitting position, she put her hand to her head with a gesture as of one suffering some cruel pain.

"How long," she murmured, "how long can I bear it? God grant me strength to endure to the end. If mothers could foresee what 'Deliver us from evil' may some day come to mean, they might hope their babies might never live to learn a prayer."

Mr. Brady's mother it may reasonably be supposed had been tempted to indulge in somewhat similar thoughts before death considerately removed her from a contemplation of her son's demerits; and certainly public opinion had so rapidly discovered all the shortcomings of the owner of Maryville that it was tacitly admitted, (so far as human judgment could understand), if he had never been born it would have been better for him and all belonging to him.

One of the effects of this widely-spread prejudice against a man who, determined to rise by his own efforts, had certainly spared no pains in the attempt, was that from having his wrongs comparatively speaking overlooked Amos Scott became at once a popular and distinguished individual. Letters were sent to certain newspapers on the subject of tenant-right, in which Scott's case was mentioned. Leaders were written referring directly to the still unsettled dispute at the Castle Farm, and indirectly to the attempt of one of the disputants to appropriate the inheritance of a gentleman of whom the country was deservedly proud.

Mr. Brady threatened to proceed against the proprietor of one of the Kilcurragh papers unless an apology were inserted, but the proprietor inserted no apology, and no proceedings

were instituted. A man who has a whole county against him may well be excused for dreading the cross-examination of an Irish barrister, and this man dreaded it with a wholesome horror, and was discreet accordingly.

All this time Amos Scott was retailing his grievances to lawyer after lawyer, walking many miles to "get speech" of gentlemen he thought might take his part, and get him his rights as he called them.

He would be off early in the morning—a piece of oat-cake, or griddle bread, in the pocket of his home-spun frieze coat, and he would come home at night foot-sore and weary, having broken his fast with no other food save that mentioned, washed down by a draught of water from some wayside brook, too tired to eat, too sick at heart to sleep.

For all men were in the same story. Whether they expressed sorrow for his misfortunes or told him by their manner his affairs were no concern of theirs, the result proved identical. Nothing could be done in the matter. No money—no influence—no lapse of time—no amount of trouble could undo the evil brought by that promise which the Earl had forgotten almost as soon as made.

Lawyers of course took a prosaic view of the affair, and simply assured Scott there was no use in throwing good money after bad; that he had no case, and they could not make one for him; whilst even those private individuals who commiserated him most, could not refrain from expressing wonderment at the utter simplicity which caused him to take no manner of precaution for his own safety in the transaction.

"What would you have had me do, sir?" he asked one gentleman piteously. "What more did I want than Th' Airl's word? Sure, if I had told him I'd do a thing, that would have been as good as any bond, and me only a poor man labouring with my hands to keep me and my wife and the family.

"Says Th' Airl to me, says he,

"'The land's yours for three lives longer, and you can put in one of the three for yourself.'

"So then I asked him, would I take the money on to the agent, and he says,

"'No, you may give it to me.'

"And I counted the notes into his own hand. I mind how the sun shone on a ring he had on his finger while I was

doing it. Then I asked him about the writings, and he said, they couldn't be signed till Henry the young airl came of age, but that if Lady Jane died before he did so, he would see me safe.

"He was riding off when he turned, and said,

"'I suppose though, my good fellow, you are on the right side, because if not, I must give you back your money, and let somebody that is have the renewal.'

"He said it joking like. He was always free and pleasant in his way Th' Airl."

A simple enough narrative, which no one who heard it doubted the truth of for a moment. A narrative which was recited by many a stump orator of the day, and stirred the hearts of thousands who were or who imagined themselves to be labouring under injustice as great and as irremediable.

Simple as it was, however, no human being could persuade Amos Scott that any of his listeners perfectly understood it. Had even one amongst the number done so, he felt quite satisfied he should hear no more said about his defiance being worse than useless.

"If I could only make yer honour comprehend it," he said reproachfully, though respectfully, to Lord Ardmorne's agent, who spite of his having, as he assured Amos over and over again, nothing whatever to do with the Glendares or their tenants, had been seized upon by the farmer for help and sympathy, "you would see it as I see it."

"Mr. Scott," answered the agent solemnly, "if I could only make you comprehend it, you would see how hopeless your position is."

When, however, did argument or assertion convince an obstinate, uneducated man. If such a miracle were ever wrought by earthly means, it was not in the case of the poor, misguided farmer who wandered about the country seeking help from this one and that, discoursing about his wrongs in lonely cabins, telling his grievances to chance companions, wasting his slender means in feeing such lawyers as would take his money, and in providing food for such of his family as were still at home.

David had returned Miss Moffat's loan to that young lady with a characteristic note, in which, after thanking her for her goodness and telling her how troubled in his mind he was to hear of the master's death, he went on to say how grateful he should be in case she had no need of the money if

she would lend it to his next oldest brother, who was mad to join him." And now two of the sons were in America, two of the daughters in service, and Reuben ready to take a schoolmaster's place when the old people could spare him.

"But I can't leave them yet, Miss Grace," he wrote. "I am not much use here, I know; but still I can't speak a word to the father when he comes home at night, and the mother is too heartsore to ask him 'what luck?' She is keen on now for us to start for America, but the father won't hear talk of it. David sent her home a pound two months ago, and another last week; a man who went out from these parts twenty years since, and who has never been in Ireland again till now, brought it, and some odds and ends of presents, amongst other things a walking-stick that we often say would have just pleased the master; it is so light, though so big; it is made from the root of the vine, Mr. Moody says, and seems wonderfully handy for almost any purpose. He tells us America is the poor man's country, and it seems like it. He went away with as little as any of us, and he has come home dressed like a gentleman, with gold studs in his shirt, and a gold watch and chain, and not a word of Irish in his tongue. It is just wonderful to hear how like a native-born American he talks. He tried to persuade my father to leave what he calls the 'rotten old ship' and make for 'new diggings,' but my father bid him not talk about things he has no knowledge of, and the decent man went away, offended like."

But in this Reuben Scott chanced to be mistaken; Mr. Moody did not cease visiting at the Castle Farm because he was offended with its owner. He only did so, as he chanced to remark to an acquaintance, because he never had cared for society where "pistols and bowie knives were lying about, and he guessed there would be one or the other at work before Scott moved away from his clearing."

Affairs had arrived at this pass when Mr. Brady, finding the law in his own province slow to assist him, decided on going to Dublin and seeking counsel there.

Not having confined to his own bosom the purport of this journey, the Kingslough rabble got hold of it, and decided that an auspicious time for giving public expression to their feelings had arrived.

A meeting therefore was convened to take place on the day of Mr. Brady's departure, when it was decided that gentleman should be hung in effigy, and a scaffold for this

laudable purpose was actually in course of erection, when an extremely strong hint from the magistrates stopped its further progress. Not to be defeated, however, within twenty-four hours Kingslough and its neighbourhood was startled from its propriety by the sight of monster bills, which occupied every available space where it was possible to placard the announcement, stating that the body of Mr. Daniel Brady would be removed from Somerford Street to its place of interment on the following day, at four o'clock P.M., when the attendance of friends would be esteemed a favour.

Now Somerford Street—not an inconsiderable thoroughfare in the early days of Ballylough—had by a not infrequent turn of time's wheel become one of the lowest, dirtiest, most disreputable lanes in Kingslough—a lane where vice and filth caroused in wretched fashion together; where sin and misery waved their rags in defiance of law and decency; whence respectability fled as from the plague; where shame, remorse, repentance, hope, could not exist for an hour, save it might be—and sometimes God be praised it was—for a few hours in the last extremity.

To condense the whole matter into a sentence, Somerford Street was as bad a street as could have been found even in the Liberties of Dublin, and its inhabitants were as little like men, women, and children, as men, women, and children can ever be. It was a place which, even in its own small way, need not have been afraid to hold up its head with very much more notorious courts and lanes London is sufficiently blessed to reckon within a certain area of Charing Cross at the present day; and it was from this den, inhabited by vice and misery, that Mr. Brady's obsequies were announced to take place.

What did it mean? Kingslough asked itself in a dull, stupid, inconsequent sort of way.

In a few hours more Kingslough knew, for over the first bills were pasted a second series so scurrilous, so profane, that nowhere out of the Isle of Saints could so scandalous a broadsheet have been produced.

They were not torn down. Decent people did not care to be mixed up in such an affair; the authorities were averse to acting in the matter without advice and consultation, and perhaps feared, as authorities in great cities have since unwisely feared, to make mountains out of molehills by premature interference.

So Kingslough read, and held out its hands, or gravely shook its head, or passed on without sign, or smiled with grim approval of the atrocious bill, or expressed its sympathy in drunken words full of significance, and looks more significant still.

It was the early summer time. Once again the crops were springing and ripening at the Castle Farm. Crops not sown this time by Amos or one belonging to him; and it was light in that northern latitude so soon in the morning, that to get out in the grey dawn almost involved sitting up during the few hours of the short night.

Nevertheless, in the grey dawn some one was astir tearing down those disgraceful placards. Slowly and calmly the sea came rippling in on the shore, closely the blinds were drawn on the Parade and in the houses of Glendare Terrace, in the east there was still not a glimpse of the rising sun, whilst rapidly and nervously the flitting figure did its work.

All at once a burly brute, who, having business far away at an early hour had risen betimes, turned a corner suddenly, and caught sight of a dark figure engaged in the work of destruction. With a whoop and a shout he rushed forward; with a shriek the woman, for it was a woman, fled.

Swift as she was he gained upon her; she left the rough pavement and sped like a greyhound along the more level road, all in vain. Panting, sobbing, she heard the thud of his heavy shoes almost at her heels, felt in imagination his hand on her shoulder, when suddenly turning the corner of a street to try to escape him, she fell almost into the arms of a third person, who, in less time than it takes me to write the words, had planted a good serviceable blow between the eyes of her pursuer, and sent him sprawling in the gutter.

"Mrs. Brady," he said, turning to the apparition which had so suddenly greeted his vision, "what in Heaven's name has brought you here at this time of night?"

"I——" she began in a broken husky voice, "I heard of it all and came," at which point she gave up trying to explain, and dropped down in a heap on the nearest doorstep insensible.

"Here is a delightful complication," thought Mr. Hanlon as he looked first at the burly brute just gathering himself together, and skulking off with a look of ineffable hate overspreading his countenance, and then at Mrs. Brady, whose

light figure he supported with one hand while fumbling for his latch-key with the other.

Had the gift of second sight been vouchsafed to that clever surgeon and mistaken orator, he would have fled from Kingslough within an hour more swiftly than Lot did from the Cities of the Plain, to avoid being mixed up with the evil to come.

CHAPTER XXX.

BAD NEWS.

Passing through Kingslough *en route* from India to Woodbrook, Mr. John Riley was so fortunate as to obtain a good view of the vagabond procession that accompanied Mr. Brady's effigy to its resting-place; and perhaps that gentleman had never felt so little proud of his countrymen as when —his driver compelled to draw the horse on one side and halt, in order to allow the rabble to pass—he beheld a crowd composed of the very scum of the population marching in irregular fashion to the noise made by several cows'-horns, a fife, a drum, and a fiddle, the latter musical instrument being played by a blind man seated in a rickety cart, to which, with sundry broken leathern straps and stronger pieces of rope, a half-starved donkey was harnessed.

There they came, the lowest of the low, accompanied by women who looked as though they had lost every attribute of their sex, and were indeed only human because of their utter abject misery. On they came, most of them women, ragged, bonnetless, shoeless, and stockingless, clad in dirt as in a garment; their masses of unkempt, uncared-for hair, twisted into loose untidy coils at the back of their heads; a terrible sight to one who had almost forgotten such a sight was to be seen. Nor were the men one whit better, shambling along in old shoes never made for them, with torn coats or jackets, with trousers from which every trace of the original cloth had vanished, with hats and caps of every conceivable form, battered, rimless, napless, or ragged, with tufts of hair in some instances shooting like rank grass through holes in the crown, with faces always wild, reckless, haggard, now lit up with an almost demoniac excitement. On they came, cheering, cursing, singing, shouting, followed

pell-mell by all the rosy-cheeked, fair-haired, bare-legged, bare-footed, dirty-faced children in the town, who danced after the procession right merrily. Some there were better clothed than those composing the mass of the crowd: men with sedate faces and unmended coats and sound shoes, who looked as though they gave their presence as a solemn duty, but who were careful to keep on the sidepaths, and allow the unwashed multitude in the roadway as wide a berth as possible.

In the middle of the people, borne on the shoulders of four stalwart ruffians, was the so-called corpse; a door torn from its hinges serving the purpose of a bier, and a piece of sacking answering for a pall.

A hideous spectacle altogether; but then as now there was no particular reason why the innocent diversions of the masses should be interfered with.

"What are they doing—what does it mean—what is it all about?" asked Mr. Riley of his driver.

"Don't keep your face turned their way," answered the man in a hurried whisper. "If they even* who you are they'll be wantin' to chair you. It's burying Brady's effigy all this is about. Come, now, keep your distance all of you," he continued, addressing some irrepressible beggars, who, seeing a stranger, at once appealed to him for help, and with scant ceremony he began using his whip to right and left, and so kept the most importunate at bay till the procession had passed.

"What has Mr. Brady been doing now?" asked Mr. Riley with some curiosity, as they drove on once more.

"Nothin' much fresh, yer honour; but they've taken a hathred to him, and wanted to hang him, but the magistrates wouldn't let them put up a gallows, so now they're goin' to bury him on the sea-shore. He's away to Dublin to get all the law money can buy against Amos Scott, and that has stirred them up a bit."

Meantime the crowd surged on to the beach, which the receding tide had left bare, and across the shore still wet and glistening, through pools of water, over slippery bunches of seaweed, the bearers went, stumbling and staggering, whilst the band playing more lugubrious airs than ever led the way, and the men and the women and the children followed hooting, laughing, screaming.

* Guess.

Arrived at the extremest distance from high-water mark it was possible to reach, a hole was dug and the body tossed in. The most voluble member of the assemblage then mounted the donkey-cart, and with a sheet wrapped round him to imitate a surplice, proceeded to deliver a travesty of the Burial Service over the grave. In language as deficient of ordinary decency as it was full of horrible profanity, he recounted the history of Daniel Brady from his cradle to his grave, and narrated to an admiring audience the way of life chosen by this man whose loss they had to deplore. A few there were among the by-standers possessed of courage enough to cry "Shame!" at passages more than usually ribald and impious, but their voices were drowned by shrieks of laughter, by cheers and exclamations of appreciation.

When the merriment had reached its height, however, a man came picking his steps over the shore, and making his way a little into the crowd, shouted, "Silence!" in a tone that rang high above the clamour, and seemed to wander out like the dying sound of a clarion's note over the quiet sea.

"We can't have any more of this," he said. "Robert Sweeney take off that rag and get out of the cart. McIlwrath, I am astonished to see a respectable man like you countenancing such disgraceful proceedings. Be off home all of you. I shall not allow you to stay here another minute."

"You'll let us cover the poor fellow up snug, or the tide 'll be taking him a dance?" entreated one man with a squint and short of an arm.

"Be quick about it then," was the answer, and the sand was shovelled in, and then trodden down by heavy boots, each bystander who wore such articles giving the grave a hearty kick, even the women left the prints of their feet on the surface; and then Mr. Sweeney having laconically disposed of both body and soul in a sentence it is unnecessary to transcribe, but which restored thorough good humour amongst the cowed and sullen assemblage,—the people straggled off, leaving the constabulary officer alone.

"It was better to let them finish their work," he said to himself as he paced slowly by the water's edge, looking after the retreating rabble, "or we should have had the thing tossing in and out with every tide. After all, Mr. Brady," he went on, "if straws do show how the wind blows, I should not particularly care to stand in your shoes to-day."

Of the scene which greeted his arrival in Kingslough, Mr.

Riley wrote a vivid description to his old friend Mrs. Hartley; nothing could have pleased that lady better. She felt delighted that his first letter from Woodbrook should be one she could show Miss Moffat.

Handing it over to that young lady, she said, "Here is an Irish sketch drawn by a native. It is certainly not complimentary to your favourites. Read the letter, it will amuse you."

But as Grace read, her face betokened anything rather than amusement; and when she finished she folded it up and remarked,—

"I think Mr. Riley's taste in writing that letter open to question."

"You should try and excuse his want of appreciation, Grace; remember he has laboured under the disadvantage of living many years in another country and amongst other people."

"It is of very little consequence whether I excuse him or not, I imagine," replied Miss Moffat. She had not yet seen this man returned from foreign parts. Mrs. Hartley had been visited by him in London, and reported that he was much changed in every respect.

In what way this change exhibited itself Grace did not care to inquire. That he had not come home to be at her beck and call she perfectly understood from Mrs. Hartley's manner of saying,—

"He begged me to give his kind regards to Miss Moffat if she had not quite forgotten an old acquaintance."

From that day it was a noticeable thing Miss Moffat never spoke of him as John.

The old familiar name, retained almost unconsciously through years, was laid aside, and Mr. Riley took its place. Of course he could know nothing of what she had done for him and his: how she had offered her money to save Woodbrook; how she had looked forward to seeing him once again with a mingled feeling of pleasure and pain; and it was right, quite right, he should look upon and think of her almost as a stranger.

"A lover never can be a friend," she thought a little bitterly. "He never is able to forget having been refused," which is not perhaps so unnatural as Grace seemed inclined to imagine.

And now came this letter. Ah! the John she remembered

never would have written such an one—never could, she might have conceded.

His proclivities had always of course been towards Toryism, but he was not hard against the people; he knew their faults, but he loved their virtues; and now the first day he returned he could write an account of what he saw, and turn the very sins of the Irish into ridicule.

Further, he never once mentioned Nettie, although it was her husband's effigy he beheld borne along by the populace, and he said little about Woodbrook and the state in which he found affairs; of Lucy's marriage the only mention he made was a remark to the effect that, following the traditions of the family, she having no fortune had cast her lot with a husband who had no fortune either.

Altogether Grace felt far from satisfied. Mr. Riley recently returned from India, and John—dear old John of the happy days at Bayview—were two different persons. On the whole Miss Moffat felt grateful to Lord Ardmorne for arranging the Woodbrook mortgage without any great amount of help from her.

"It might have made it very awkward," she considered. "He might have fancied it necessary to be civil to me in consequence."

And this, as matters stood, Mr. John Riley evidently did not imagine necessary.

At the end of his letter he begged to send his kind regards to Miss Moffat. That was all. No sentence about Bayview, no reference to the places both of them knew so well. To Miss Moffat it was rather a new feeling, that of being left out in the cold, and she did not like it.

Mr. Riley's letter, however, supplied her with food for reflection besides that enumerated.

Hitherto Grace had merely known vaguely that Mr. Brady was an undesirable acquaintance, a man fond of driving hard bargains, of overreaching his neighbours if he could; a man of whom his wife stood in dread, of whom the world had nothing to tell which redounded to his credit, but now all these sins and shortcomings were italicized in her mind, and a dread of some great evil befalling Nettie in consequence of the information she had given began to haunt her night and day.

She was totally in the power of this man whom the people vilified; whose effigy they had carried through the streets,

and buried with every act of contumely they could devise. She was, though in her own country, friendless, penniless, helpless.

She had dared much in order to save those who, though her own relatives, formerly discarded her; and this very courage and forgetfulness of wrongs in a great extremity helped to recommend Nettie more tenderly than ever to her old friend.

What could she do to make matters better for her? Even in the solitude of her own chamber, Grace blushed and winced to think all she could offer any one was money; but still believing the day might come when Nettie would need it, she sat down and wrote her a long touching letter, saying how hurt she felt to hear of some recent events just come to her knowledge; how she dreaded lest evil might arise out of past circumstances, to which she need not refer more particularly; how she begged and implored her if evil did arise to come at once to England and the writer. In a postscript Grace added that, lest she should at any time want money on a sudden emergency, she enclosed sufficient to meet whatever exigency might arise.

This letter she enclosed in one to Mr. Hanlon, begging him to give it into the hands of the person to whom it was addressed.

As she did so, Grace could not help smiling, and yet sighing at the memory of her Pharisaism when first Nettie devised this mode of communication.

"Ah! I did not know so much then as I do now," thought Miss Moffat, speaking mentally, as is the habit of young ladies of small experience and limited worldly knowledge, as if she were about seventy years of age.

To this letter, after some delay, came an answer.

Nettie returned the money. She dared not keep it, she said, or she would have done so. She should never have a moment's peace were it in the house, lest it might be discovered. Earnestly, though in few words, she thanked Grace for all her kindness; but "do not write to me again," she added, "it is too great a risk to run. If ever you are able to help me, I will let you know. I never can doubt you or forget the pleasant days that may come again no more for ever. If I never see you in this world again, remember Gracie I love you far, far, more at last than I did at the first. I did not think I could cry, no matter what

came or went; and yet still as I write good-bye, the words are blotted with tears."

The days went on, and Mrs. Hartley and Grace were planning an autumn tour, with a half-formed intention of lengthening their foreign travel by going on to Rome and wintering in the Eternal City.

To Grace the idea was very pleasant. To Mrs. Hartley the prospect, much as she valued English luxuries and prized home comforts, not disagreeable.

"I should not go unless you were with me," she said, however, to her visitor; and Grace pressed her hand in reply.

The two women were exactly suited to each other. Mrs. Hartley's unvarying cheerfulness; her sound common sense; her abundant worldly knowledge; her stores of information; —these things were very good for a young woman like Grace, who was naturally somewhat dreamy and imaginative, and whose experiences of society, of men and women, and manners and morals, were, notwithstanding her feeling that she had been living and learning through centuries, had hitherto been limited to an extremely small circle.

On the other hand, Grace was the very person with whom to live happily. There were no wills and musts in her nature; she had no ways of her own that she insisted upon other people travelling; she was amiable, generous, frank, and gentle-mannered, and, to crown all her other excellences, she was, as Mrs. Hartley said, as good as a picture to look at.

To women whose day, if they ever had one, is over, who have ceased to compete for those prizes of love and admiration which all women are anxious to secure, even though they may not put themselves forward in the struggle, there is something extremely pleasant in the contemplation of a pretty face, and Grace's face was grateful to Mrs. Hartley's critical eyes.

"I wonder what John would think of her now," she often asked herself. "Would he fear to make a second attempt to win her, or dare I hope all may come right in the end. She is the wife for him, he is the husband for her, if they both can only be induced to think so. I must contrive to get him to join us somehow abroad," which was indeed the secret reason for Mrs. Hartley's advocacy of the foreign tour and her hesitation on the subject of Rome.

"Rome is a long way off," she argued, "but we shall see what we shall see; time enough to settle about where we shall winter when the autumn comes."

Things as regards Grace were in this tranquil state, when one afternoon, while Mrs. Hartley was out on a visiting expedition, from which her guest had begged to be excused, Miss Moffat, seated in a low chair by the window of her own especial sanctum, a small morning room which had been fitted up for and appropriated to her use, took the *Times* that chanced to be lying close to her hand.

It was a warm day, one of those glorious summer afternoons so frequent in England, which are trying nevertheless to those born and bred in a colder climate, and Grace, tired and languid, let her eyes wander over the sheet, reading nothing in particular, but culling a paragraph here and another there with a sort of lazy and unexcited interest.

Suddenly, however, something met her sight which riveted her attention; she grasped the paper more firmly, she sat upright instead of leaning back; she pushed her hair away from her face as though it oppressed her, and then read the passage which had caught her notice once again more carefully. This was what it contained,—

"A shocking murder is reported as having taken place in the north of Ireland, hitherto comparatively free from the charge of agrarian outrage. The victim is a Mr. Brady, a gentleman of some property, and connected by marriage with several families of ancient lineage and high standing. The unfortunate gentleman was discovered about a mile from his own house quite dead, though still warm. A dispute about some land is supposed to have urged on his murderer. A man named Scott has been taken into custody; a stick with which the fatal blow was dealt, and known to have belonged to Scott, having been found near the spot. The unfortunate gentleman had not yet reached the prime of life. He leaves a widow and several children to deplore his untimely fate."

There are truths so terrible that the mind at first absolutely refuses to accept them, and like one in a dream with a stunned surprise, Grace Moffat read and re-read the paragraph, unable to realize its meaning.

Then suddenly the full horror of its statement broke upon her. It had come. then, this trouble, the prevision of which she now understood she had felt that morning when she and

Mr. Hanlon walked over to the Castle Farm. It had come at a moment when she was least prepared for it, when her thoughts were far distant from Ireland; when, much as she loved her own country, she was becoming reconciled to the ways and manners of another country; when she was learning to like English people, and beginning, as the young always can do, to find an interest in the hopes, fears, and projects of those with whom she was thrown.

How the next half-hour was passed Grace never precisely knew. The servants, glad in that orderly household of an excitement of any kind, prepared and retailed many versions of how Marrables—Mrs. Hartley's highly respectable butler, who had a presence like a bishop and a face solemn and important as that of a parish clerk—hearing the bell ring violently hurried to the morning-room, where he found Miss Moffat standing in the middle of the apartment looking like death itself; how surprised out of his dignified deportment for once, he said before he was spoken to,—

"Gracious! Miss, what has happened, and what is the matter?"

To which she replied,—"Get me something; I have had a great shock." He fetched her wine and the housemaid water, and the lady's maid smelling-salts and eau-de-cologne and a fan; whilst the butler suggested the propriety of sending at once for a doctor.

"No," said Miss Moffat authoritatively, "I shall be better soon;" and she sat down and leaned back and shut her eyes, the trio regarding her with interest, not unmixed with awe the while.

Then almost directly she opened her eyes, and looking at them one after the other, remarked,—

"It is not true, is it?"

"No, Miss," answered Marrables promptly; his acquaintance with illness was slight, but he had always heard sick people ought to be humoured.

"Ah! I forgot," said Miss Moffat wearily. "Pour me out some wine and water, Marrables, I will take it now; and Taylor," turning to Mr. Hartley's maid, "I wish you would pack up some dresses and linen for me; I must go to Ireland to-night."

"Yes, Miss."

"And directly Mrs. Hartley returns let me know."

"Mrs. Hartley is here now," exclaimed Marrables, and

went out to meet his mistress, followed reluctantly by his fellow-servants.

Into the room came Mrs. Hartley dressed in all her bravery, with a face expressive of the utmost anxiety.

"What is all this, Grace, that Marrables has been frightening me with? Why, child, what has happened? You look as if you had seen a ghost."

For answer, Grace picked up the *Times* and handed it to her friend, pointing out the paragraph she wished her to read. Marrables saw her do it, and it was not long before he had read the passage also.

"What are you thinking of doing?" asked Mrs. Hartley, drawing her out into the open air, and holding a parasol over her.

"I shall go to Ireland to-night," Grace answered.

"For what purpose?"

"Chiefly to be with Nettie, partly to see if anything can be done for Amos."

"You think he is guilty."

"I do not see that there can be any doubt of that. He must have been mad; but I suppose whether mad or not he will have to suffer for it all the same."

Mrs. Hartley paused. She took in the position at once; she knew Grace's temperament, and she felt certain she would never rest content to remain inactive at such a juncture.

"Money can do a great deal," she remarked at last, "and influence more; and in any case I know it will be a comfort hereafter for you to think both were brought to bear on this case. Yes, my love, I will not say a word to dissuade you from your intention; I would offer to go with you myself if I thought I could be of any real assistance. Marrables shall accompany you as far as Dublin—there Mr. Nicholson can see to you. And, Grace, do not fret about the matter more than you can possibly avoid. A loophole may be found for Scott to creep through, and as for Nettie, I fancy she will be far happier as a widow than ever she was as a wife."

"Oh! do not say that," Grace entreated. "It was almost the first idea which occurred to me, and I hated myself for it."

"Well, we will not say anything about it then," agreed Mrs. Hartley, "although if he has left her comfortably off ——" but here Miss Moffat stopped her ears and refused to listen. She was recovering from the first effect of the blow,

but she could not bear to hear the tragedy discussed in this matter-of-fact, cool, business-like style.

Young people are occasionally somewhat unreasonable. It jarred against Grace's sensibilities to hear some two hours later the dinner-bell ring just as though Mr. Brady were not lying at Maryville stiff and cold, and Amos Scott not in Kilcurragh Gaol charged with his murder. Perhaps Mrs. Hartley guessed something of this, for she said,—

"Now, Grace, unless you eat I shall not allow you to go. Fasting may be all very well in its way, and I dare say it is, but it is not well when a young lady has a long journey before her, and the prospect of a considerable amount of work to follow."

Hearing which remark Mr. Marrables, who waited upon the ladies with his accustomed dignity, took especial care to fortify his system with a thorough good meal, and to provide against any causalties in the way of starvation by packing up a goodly supply of edibles, and laying the cellar likewise under contribution to a moderate though judicious extent.

After all, if the English are unimpulsive, they are useful; if they are undemonstrative, they are not heartless. Grace was forced to admit both these facts when she discovered everything she could possibly require packed up without a question being asked on the subject; when she found her travelling-dress laid out for her to don before dinner that she might not be obliged to hurry from table; when she saw the carriage brought round to a second, and beheld Marrables, after he had shut her and Mrs. Hartley within, mount on the box beside the coachman with no more fuss that if he were merely going to attend his mistress to the station; when she heard Mrs. Hartley, who, as a rule, did not like shortening her meals, remark,—

"Now, my dear, I think it is time we were putting on our bonnets," and go off to prepare for a twelve miles' drive as if it were in the ordinary course of things for an elderly lady to consider her own ease so little.

These things all impressed Grace sensibly, as did one other little trifle. At the last moment it was discovered that by some oversight Miss Moffat's warm shawl had been left behind.

"Fetch my cloak out of the brougham," said Mrs. Hartley immediately, and, spite of her guest's remonstrances, she insisted on Grace taking it with her.

"Such magnificence!" exclaimed Miss Moffat, looking at the fur lining and the satin outside.

"Nonsense; it is old and worn, and shabby, but it will keep you warm. Good-bye now, my child—come back to me safe and sound—God bless you!" And the train was off.

CHAPTER XXXI.

GRACE VISITS MARYVILLE.

With much the same feeling as a gipsy, who has been compelled to live for a time amongst the house-dwellers, returns to the camp on the common, to the savoury supper furnished gratuitously from his nearest neighbour's farmyard, to the bed on the green-sward, with heaven for a canopy and ferns for his pillow, so Grace, after a not disagreeable or uninstructive sojourn in the foreign land of England, beheld once more the fair shores and heard the familiar accents of her own country.

Home, after all, is home be it ever so homely; and the tones and the voices familiar to childhood sound sweet after absence, let those tones and voices lack refinement though they may.

Grace had outgrown her prejudice against the English as affected. She had learned that their accent was as genuine and natural as the rougher tongue of her native land; but still just as a Londoner, coming south from the Land o' Cakes, thanks God when he reaches Carlisle to hear again something approaching a civilized language, so her heart warmed at sound of the familiar intonation. She was home again; she was amongst her own country people; she was no longer lost in the great country of England; she was a person of importance once more; she had ceased to be a princess in disguise,—back in the old familiar places, she was Miss Moffat of Bayview again.

From the moment she set foot in Dublin, she recognized that fact; and once for all I may as well state, it was pleasant to her. She had been but one of many in England; she was a person of importance in Ireland. She had learned much near the head-quarters of civilisation, but she had not learned to be indifferent to the prestige given by wealth and rank and being well known by repute even beyond her county.

These weaknesses, which add so much to happiness, but which usually develop themselves later in life, were with Grace an integral part of her nature. She was of the soil; she was Irish and she loved everything Irish. There might be things in the country she could wish improved, but still the place was home to her. And Grace's heart swelled and her eyes filled with tears as she heard the brogue floating around her, and those persuasive tones which in Dublin always seem addressed only to one person, and that the listener, fell upon her ear.

Dirty, picturesque, polite, plausible, unsuccessful, they were her countrymen and countrywomen; and for a moment, Grace, in the excitement of her return, forgot the errand which had brought her back, and said to Mr. Nicholson in an access of enthusiasm,—

"How delightful all this is after England!"

"It is very kind of you to say so, Miss Moffat," he replied. "For my part, I think London is the only place worth living in on earth."

"Oh! fie," exclaimed Grace, "and you an Irishman!"

"It is precisely because I am an Irishman that I say so," was the reply. "I have met with many English people who believe they should like always to reside in Dublin."

"I never have," and Grace sighed when she thought of Mrs. Hartley's openly expressed opinions.

Ere long, however, her enthusiasm toned down. She had not reached Mr. Nicholson's house before her thoughts were busy with the matter which had brought her to Ireland. Across the breakfast-table she talked to her companion about Amos Scott, and how it would fare with him.

"I fear badly," said that gentleman, who had heard all about the farmer during the time he spent at Bayview, and read the reports that followed after the murder, in the papers. "Everything seems against him. His animus was no secret, and his stick was found beside the dead man."

"Poor Amos," ejaculated Grace. "His wrongs have driven him mad."

"Neither wrongs nor madness will reconcile a north of Ireland jury to knocking a man over in the dark," said Mr. Nicholson sententiously. "His chance might have been better in the south or west."

"What do you think they will do to him?" asked Miss Moffat anxiously.

Mr. Nicholson paused for a moment, then he said,—

"I am afraid it will go against him, and if it does, unless he have powerful friends——"

"Oh!" she cried, "there is not one in all that part of the country but would speak for him. Every one knows how sorely he has been tried. Every one's sympathy must be with him——"

"Surely, Miss Moffat, your sympathies are not with him?" interposed Mr. Nicholson gravely. "Let Mr. Brady be what he might, his right to the land was undoubted. A man is not to be murdered because he asks for his own."

Having made which remark much in the interest of the servant, who, as is usual in Ireland, had both ears laid back to listen to the conversation of his betters, the lawyer relapsed into silence, leaving Grace to cogitate at her leisure over the plain truth contained in her sentence.

Her sympathies were with Amos Scott, but her common sense told her a man ought to be able to insist on having his own without paying for his temerity by his life.

Once again she was at sea, as every person is sooner or later who embarks on the study of Irish difficulties. "There was something rotten in the state of Denmark" she had long known. Dimly she was beginning to comprehend part of the rottenness lay in public feeling, popular prejudice, in that crass ignorance born of Romish supremacy, and nursed by self-asserting Dissent, till it might have puzzled a wiser than Solomon to say whether Catholic or Protestant were the most intractable—whether the senseless obedience of the south to its priests were worse than the bigoted intolerance of the north to every created being which differed in opinion from itself.

Every great virtue throws a shadow—the loftier the virtue the longer the shadow. Grace understood, who better?—the virtues of her hardworking, uncomplaining, patient, stubborn northern compatriots; but the dark shadows she had seen likewise; she was beginning to understand that the natives of no land are perfect, that God has conferred no more special patent of immunity from the taint of original sin on the poor than on the rich.

Though an enthusiastic, Grace was a thoughtful woman—a conjunction in one so quietly brought up, not merely possible, but probable, and the problem of humanity, which sooner or later troubles every one brought into contact with

it, began to perplex her the first hour she again set foot in Ireland.

The same trouble which beset her is vexing English philanthropists at the present day. Even in happy England there is a cancer; who shall adventure to cut it out? there is a worm at the root; who shall dare turn up the ground and show where it is? There are doctors who would palliate—there are men who would destroy the upper branches—who would prune and cut and lop and top the trees; but there are none, unless, indeed, it may be a few brave souls, who have wisdom enough and courage sufficient to turn round and tell the lower classes,—"The disease is in yourselves. We cannot cure it unless you will consent to help yourselves. You may lop and top for ever—you may cut down an ancient aristocracy, and try to dignify a mushroom nobility of your own creation, but your labour will be for naught, and your trouble loss utterly without gain, for wherever the evil may have begun it is with you it now lies. The rank and file of the social army are utterly demoralised. Each man wants to command. No man is willing to obey. The spirit of discontent is abroad. Work has become distasteful; in that state of life in which God has placed him no human being seems satisfied to stay."

In one respect the fault of the Irish has always been that of resting satisfied too easily, and this idea was an integral part of Grace's faith. At the same time she, being at once clear-sighted and critical, could not avoid seeing her country people were satisfied easily, or indeed at all, only when the satisfaction was given in the way that pleased them; that is to say, a dinner of fish, under certain conditions, was not objectionable, but a dinner, even off a stalled ox, unless it happened to be served exactly as they thought well, or in the place they saw fit to eat it, would not have met with their approval.

Had she not herself offered to Amos Scott the choice of farms as fertile, homesteads as substantial as that he could hope to hold no longer; and had he not refused her kindness almost with scorn. He said he would have the familiar acres or none. He would have the home rendered dear by the mere passage of time, by the events which had taken place within its walls, or else a dry ditch and the stars of heaven shining down on him and his. He would law and law and law until his last shilling was gone, in feeing men who could

never put his wrong right on this earth; he would fight every inch of the ground only to be beaten at last; he said all this—what had come of it?

That he was lying in gaol, waiting his trial for murder; that, likely as not, he would walk out some morning on the scaffold—his grey hair floating in the wind—to end years of suffering, to expiate years of folly with his life.

Her sympathies were with him. How would it fare with the wrong-doers, if no one had compassion for those who err? If she could help him, if she could save him, she would. To Mrs. Hartley she had said, and said as she believed truly, she must return to Ireland chiefly for Nettie's sake. Now she was in Ireland Grace could not conceal from herself the fact that she had come home as much in the interests of the accused as in those of Brady's widow.

"Poor Amos," she thought, "the gentry will be all against him. They will forget what he suffered. They will remember only his sin."

Notwithstanding Mrs. Nicholson's entreaties, Grace made no longer stay in Dublin than it was possible to avoid. She longed to be in the north. It seemed to her she was needed there, and Mr. Nicholson, having been so fortunate as to find an acquaintance who was proceeding as far as Kilcurragh, put the heiress in his charge, and, it may as well be confessed with some misgivings as to how Grace would comport herself in so critical a position, saw her off.

"If you want my help," he said, and he felt quite certain she would, "I will come at an hour's notice."

Very gratefully she gave him her hand, and thanked him with one of her rare and wonderful smiles.

"A woman, if she had been portionless, to have driven a man to distraction," considered Mr. Nicholson, and he was right. An heiress is never so truly a woman as other women. Gold clothes her as with a garment, and it is a somewhat stiff robe in which to take her walks abroad.

Decidedly Grace would have been a more charming, even though a much less useful woman, had her face alone been her fortune.

As matters stood, however, she made friends so successfully with the elderly gentleman who was her travelling companion, that by the time they arrived at their journey's end, he was sufficiently interested in Amos Scott to assist her in finding his solicitor, who chanced to be a gentleman famous for

making the best of bad cases—for getting off notorious vagabonds, for taking advantage of legal quibbles, and saving men's money and lives by the splitting of a legal straw.

"We are all friends here, I suppose," he said looking doubtfully at Grace's companion, whilst he stripped the feathers off a pen. "I may speak confidentially?"

"Most decidedly," Grace answered.

"I can do nothing for him," he remarked. "He will not trust me."

"How do you mean?" she asked.

"He says he is innocent. What can any human being do in the face of such an assertion?"

For a minute or two Grace sat silent. The idea was as new to her as obnoxious to Scott's lawyer. Hitherto it had never occurrred to her that he would deny his guilt; but now—something—not born of reason or conviction, but a subtle instinct, prompted her to answer,

"If Amos Scott says he is innocent, you may believe him. I have known him since I was a child. At such a juncture he would not tell a lie."

The lawyer smiled.

"Believe me, Miss Moffat," he said, "the prospect of a halter has a wonderfully deterrent influence on the candour of most people."

"Perhaps," she replied; "but he would tell me the truth."

"Will you see him?" asked the other eagerly.

"Yes, certainly."

"And report the result of your interview to me?" he continued.

Only for an instant she hesitated, then she replied,—

"Word for word as far as I can recollect; what he says you shall hear."

"Then I may save him," he continued.

"If money——" began Grace, but he stopped her.

"I am not indifferent to money," was the reply, "but I never work for it alone. A thousand pounds paid down could never quicken my intellect as much as a perfect knowledge of a case. With Scott I am utterly at sea. He will not confide in me, and I do not know what to do for him. And the Assizes are close at hand, that is the worst of it."

"I shall see you again before the week is out," said Grace.

"Meantime——" and she laid some notes on the table, which the lawyer folded up and handed to her once again.

"Money could do no more than I have tried to accomplish," he remarked. "When it is all over pay me if you will."

"Upon the whole, Miss Moffat," criticized her travelling companion, "it seems to me the rogues have the best of it in this life. No honest man could find a lawyer like that," which is no doubt true. Perhaps it is part of the Eternal Justice to leave one world in which the rogues and the thieves and the plausible soft-spoken vagabonds have the best of it.

Spite of all the clergy tell us I am afraid, notwithstanding the hard lines many ragamuffins meet with, the paradise of sinners is earth.

Straight from Kilcurragh to Maryville drove Grace. Her travelling companion saw her and her slender luggage safely bestowed on the outside car, by which vehicle she elected to travel, and then made his farewell.

"Good-bye, Miss Moffat," he said; "I shall watch the progress of the case with interest and anxiety."

"He will tell the truth to me," she answered. And strong in this faith, she started on the long drive which lay before her.

Anxious to avoid Kingslough, and for a short time, at least, all contact with its inhabitants, she told the man to take a road lying a little inland which would, she knew, bring her out near the gates of Maryville.

It was a lovely evening, the sea lay like a mirror under the clear blue sky, the woods in the distance stood dark and green, mellowed by flushes of sunlight, that stole over them warm and bright; up and down the hillsides crept waving shadows and patches of golden light; the white cabins, nestling among fields where the wheat was already in the ear, looked as if they had every one been freshly whitewashed. Over the calm home landscape Grace gazed, tears dropping down in her heart the while; whilst her eyes gathered the peace and the loveliness of the familiar scene, her thoughts were concentrated on a grave in Kingslough churchyard. Life seemed to have begun for her in earnest at her father's death. Strangers dwelt under the remembered rooftree. To no hearth could she now creep close feeling it all her own. For others welcomes might sound,

for others smiles might be wreathed, eyes brighten, tones grow softer, but for her with neither kith nor kin who cared that she was returning a lonely woman to comfort one almost as desolate as herself?

By the time she reached Maryville the sun had set, and the gloom of the dark avenue seemed to fall heavily upon her as they drove over the soft gravel, still wet from heavy rain which had fallen in the morning.

There was not a soul stirring about the place. At the lodge no one appeared, and the driver had to open the gates for himself. As they neared the house, it seemed like a building deserted.

Not a dog's bark broke the stillness, not a sound came through the evening air to prove that life was near at hand.

The man laid that day in his grave was no quieter than the place of which he had so lately been master. Through the hall the noise of Grace's knock echoed drearily. No city of the dead was ever more silent than Maryville on the first occasion that Miss Moffat set foot within its precincts.

Standing looking over the deserted lawn, Grace after a few moments heard the sound of footsteps coming apparently from some remote distance in the house. Across a stone passage, then along a wide corridor, then over the hall paved with black and white marble came that steady heavy tread. Next instant the door was opened sufficiently to admit of a head being thrust out to see who the intruder might be; a head, covered with luxuriant black hair, belonging to a woman from whose appearance Grace instinctively recoiled.

At sight of the visitor this woman opened the door a little wider, affording Miss Moffat a full view of a female of about seven or eight and twenty, tall, erect, bold.

Evidently she had been crying, but the traces of tears failed to soften the hard defiance of her dark eyes, or the tone in which she asked Grace what she was "pleased to want?"

"Is Mrs. Brady within?" inquired the visitor.

"She is," was the reply, uttered in an accent and with a manner as uncompromising as a north wind.

"Can I see her?"

"It is not likely you can. Maybe you are a stranger, and have not heard what has happened."

"It is because I have heard," Grace answered, "that I am here. Be so good as to tell Mrs. Brady——"

"Who is it, Susan?" called out a weak, querulous voice at this juncture. "No matter who it is, tell them I am in trouble and can see no one—remember that—no one!"

"Not even Grace," answered her old friend. "Oh, Nettie! I have travelled all the way from England to be with you. Let me come in and speak to you: let me stay——"

Before she had finished her sentence Mrs. Brady had crossed the hall and flung the door wide open.

"Grace! Grace!" she cried.

That was all. In a wordless agony she clung about the new-comer. She twined her arms around her, she laid her head on her shoulder, but she never cried nor sobbed. The years fraught with agony inconceivable, seemed to have taken the power of weeping from her.

"This is the first time she has come out of her room since ——" began she of the black hair in explanation, but Mrs. Brady stopped her.

"Don't!" she said in that faint irritable voice, which spoke volumes to Grace of the sufferings she had endured. "I cannot bear to talk," she went on addressing her friend. "If you stay, if you really want to stay, you must never speak to me of it or him. Will you promise?"

"I never will unless you wish me to do so," Grace answered readily, scarcely realizing how difficult she might find it to keep her word.

"Where will I put the portmantle?" inquired the car-driver, breaking across the conversation with an abruptness which one at least of the trio felt to be a relief.

It was almost dark inside the house—so dark that Grace, unable to see the contents of her purse, stepped out into the twilight to pay the man.

"Can I get a drop of water for my horse, Miss? he asked as she counted the money into his hands, and turning she repeated the question to the servant who stood in the dooway.

"Not here," answered the woman. "The men are gone, and the dogs are loose. There is a stream crosses the road less than a mile up it; the beast can drink his fill there."

Never before—never in the whole of her life had Grace heard so inhospitable a sentence uttered. Involuntary it caused her to double the amount of the man's own gratuity, and to say to him in a low voice,—

"They are in great distress of mind here; perhaps you know."

"Yes, Miss, I know," was the reply; but Grace felt there was no sympathy in his tone, and she turned to re-enter the house with a conviction that even the circumstances of Mr. Brady's death had failed to awaken popular sympathy in his behalf.

"Where is Mrs. Brady?" she asked, peering through the twilight in search of Nettie, who was, however, nowhere visible.

"She's gone back to her room; if you want her, you'll have to go there after her. She has never come down till to-night. She has not been to say quite right in her head ever since."

"Perhaps she would rather be alone?"

"I don't think it will make any differ one way or the other," was the somewhat contemptuous answer which decided Grace on at once making her way to Nettie.

"Which is her room?" she inquired.

"Right opposite you when you get to the head of the stairs;" and thus directed, Grace without ceremony crossed the hall, ascended the staircase, and joined her friend.

She found Nettie pacing the apartment with slow, measured steps. Up and down, down and up, she marched like some animal on a chain, hopelessly, helplessly, wearily. Suddenly she stopped in this exercise.

"You ought not to stay here, Grace. I am no company for anybody now."

"If I had wanted company I should have stayed where I was," Grace answered. "I came here to see if I could not be of use to you, and I shall remain till I am quite satisfied I cannot be of any!"

"No one can help me," said Nettie deliberately. Then finding Grace kept silence, she went on hurriedly to ask,—

"What are you thinking of?"

"I was thinking, dear—" the words came softly through the darkness—"that God in His own good time will help you."

"He cannot," was the reply, spoken sharply and quickly.

"We shall see," and Grace sat down by one of the windows, while Nettie resumed her purposeless walk, backwards and forwards, forwards and backwards enough to drive a bystander to madness.

After a time the door opened.

"I have made you some tea, mem. Will you come down or will I bring it up to you?"

Nettie never answered. Neither by sign nor token did she give evidence of having heard a word.

"I will come down," said Grace after a moment's pause, sufficient to permit Mrs. Brady to reply if she would. "Should you not like a light, Nettie?" she asked with a natural hesitation about making such a suggestion in another person's house.

"I hate light," was the answer.

"How long has she been like that?" whispered Miss Moffat as the door closed between her and the blue-eyed, golden-haired Nettie of the long-ago past.

"Ever since that night; except cold water, she has not had bite or sup in her lips for the last five days."

"Where are the children?"

"I asked some of the neighbours to take them till—till—it was all over."

There was an instant's break in her voice. Next minute it was cold and hard and ringing as ever.

In the small ante-room where Mr. Brady had received the Rileys, Grace found tea prepared, and she sat down to it with what appetite she might.

She had been delicately nurtured, and the cup of coarse blue delft, the dark brown sugar, the battered tray, the black-handled knife, the smoked teapot, repelled her the moment she set eyes on the repast.

But she forced herself to eat. She had come to be useful, and she was determined to let no fastidious niceties cumber her at first starting. Her greatest trial was the woman, who after a grudging fashion strove to make her welcome. Grace's experience had never previously brought her even mentally in contact with a person of the kind, but her instinct told her there was something wrong about dark eyes and darker hair; that if everything were right she and Nettie ought not to be under the same roof, with a person against whom every nerve seemed to be at war, whose very presence was a trial, whose interest in the late master of Maryville had evidently been very close and very great. By the light of the solitary candle with which her banquet-table was illumined, Grace, quick as is the nature of her sex, took in the personal appearance and attire of the solitary domestic Maryville seemed to boast.

Not an ill-looking woman; but hard, bold, bad—bad decidedly—one with whom wickedness had not prospered. Grace looked at her poor brown-stuff gown, scanty and ill-fitting, but covering a magnificent figure; at the poor attempt at mourning made in a little black neckerchief drawn round her throat and pinned in front of the half-high dress; at her hands red and hard with work, to grasp, dimly it might be but sufficiently, the fact sin had not paid this creature high wages for the loss of all women hold dear.

The man was dead. She had wanted to ask many questions, but with this idea before her and others looming behind, Grace could ask no question of her companion, who, comprehending that without a word of explanation the other knew her position, hardened herself and decided she would make this stranger's stay unpleasant if she could.

Understanding this in a vague uncertain fashion, Grace said,—

"I suppose you do not know who I am. Mrs. Brady and I are old friends, and I have come from England to be with her in this affliction. I used to live near Kingslough; my father was Mr. Moffat of Bayview."

"I have heard tell of you both," was the reply sullenly spoken. "You'll have come over to help Amos Scott as well as to see Mrs. Brady, I'm thinking."

To which speech Miss Moffat deemed it prudent to make no reply.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A RAY OF LIGHT.

Not all Grace's persuasions could induce Mrs. Brady on the following morning to touch any breakfast. By special request Miss Moffat had been permitted to pass the night in a dressing-room opening into Nettie's apartment, and until overpowered by weariness she fell into a broken sleep, she heard the widow tossing from side to side, moaning now and then, at intervals breathing many sighs, but weeping never.

With her own hands Miss Moffat made her a tiny morsel of toast, and took that and a cup of tea to her bedside; but Nettie refused to eat, not querulously or with any effusion of

manner, but with a settled determination difficult to hope to sway.

Nevertheless, her friend thought she would try. "Dear Nettie," she said, "you ought to eat."

"I cannot; it would choke me," was the reply.

"I am afraid you will bring on an illness."

"Oh! if I could only die," and she buried her face in the pillow.

Grace went downstairs again.

As has been already stated her knowledge of mortal, physical, or deep mental sickness was not large; and if her knowledge of the latter had been, she might have felt puzzled how to deal with Nettie.

After her breakfast she sat down for a few minutes to think, and whilst she was deep in meditation Susan entered.

"The mistress would take nothing, then," she remarked, looking at the tray Grace had carried all unavailingly to Mrs. Brady.

"No."

"I thought you wouldn't get her to eat. I have tried her hard enough, I can tell you. You don't seem to have been hungry yourself," she went on, glancing at the dish of bacon swimming in grease and the new-laid eggs that, poached in fat, floated in company with the unsavoury-looking slices.

"I was not," answered Miss Moffat.

"It is not a heartsome place to come to, you're thinking, likely," suggested the woman.

"I was thinking what I could do for Mrs. Brady," Grace replied. "She ought to have something. Is there any wine in the house?"

"There is whisky," was the answer.

Grace groaned mentally. "I wonder if she would take a little milk," she said audibly.

"You can try. Will I bring you some?"

There was a secret triumph in the tone, as though she suspected the attempt would prove futile. And she was right. Nettie would have nothing but water. Of that she drank incessantly.

"I am parched," she said in answer to Grace's remonstrances. "My lips are so dry they bleed;" and as she removed her handkerchief from them, Grace saw it was stained with crimson spots.

What would Grace not have given for Mrs. Hartley's

counsel? Good women, and kind and true, lived at Kingslough, but somehow she felt at that juncture Mrs. Hartley's hard worldly sense would prove more useful than all the well-meant sympathy amiable but incompetent people could offer.

Besides, Nettie herself would have none of Kingslough, either in the way of pity or help.

All the morning Maryville was besieged with callers, notes, cards, and inquiries.

"They can come now," said Nettie bitterly, as she watched car and carriage and messenger depart unsatisfied. "They think I can go back and take the old up where I left off that morning. They do not know; how should they?"

Dinner-time arrived. With a bang, Susan set down on one side of the table at the other side of which Grace sat writing, a dish of potatoes piled high and another of herrings floating in a fresh sea of grease.

"Maybe it's not good enough for you," said the woman, with a sneer, "but it's all there is in the house."

"You mistake," said Grace; "it is quite good enough for me, but I do not think it is anything like good enough for Mrs. Brady." And she took her place at table whilst Susan flounced out of the room only to turn back and inquire whether she would "be plazed to drink water or milk."

Had she followed Mrs. Hartley's instructions Grace would have said water. As it was, the national partiality for milk common to the Irish ladies at that period, and which perhaps with the moist climate had share in their lovely complexions, extinguished all English lights, and so she chose the latter, thereby mollifying Susan, who thought "she might not be so stuck-up after all, maybe."

Of potatoes and milk Grace made her meal with relish, it must be confessed, and spite of her sorrow. The potatoes were capital, the milk rich. The herrings she could not fancy, the lake of slowly congealing fat in which they reposed effectually warned her from them. Whilst she ate she thought, "Let Susan be what she would, or perhaps would not, she, Miss Moffat, could not put that wrong right if she kept her at arms' length for ever. On the whole, had she not better try to conciliate this woman, who, spite of her position, seemed friendly to Nettie? "Perhaps," thought Grace, "because she knows if this door closes behind her, none other would open to receive her."

There were not many women who dared even think of adopting a conciliatory policy under such circumstances; but in many ways Grace's position was exceptional.

After all, what is the good of virtue if it be not sufficiently certain of its own standing to walk just once and away on the same side of the road with vice, and refrain from drawing its skirts decorously around it?

Grace's virtue, at all events, was made of sufficiently strong stuff to risk all the results of such a companionship. She hated the sin she felt had been done, as probably those to whom the nature of sin is almost a mystery alone are able—with an abhorrence, a detestation, a contempt, a loathing, akin to the feelings with which a man who had bathed from his earliest youth might look upon a disease produced by filth, and the lack of all ordinary physical cleanliness; but—black tangled hair, unkempt, unbraided, bold eyes, insolence, brazen defiance notwithstanding—she was sorry for the sinner.

Where vice flaunts past dressed in the latest fashion, driving a lovely pair of ponies, assuming the most recent fashionable manner whether that manner be modest or forward, we may call it picturesque, and forget, if we choose, the ghastly death's head lurking beneath the rouge and paint and powder plastered on the face of Sin's last successful child; but when we come to see some of Sin's despised daughters, some of those who have been cut off by their unjust parent with less even than the traditional shilling, I think the observer must be less than man or woman—more fiend than either can prove on occasion—who shall fail to consider for what inconceivably small wages the devil gets immortal souls to work his ends.

If *his* employés would strike, what an involuntary lock-out from Hell here and Hell hereafter the world should witness!

"Susan," began Miss Moffat, as the hand-maiden having piled plate and vegetable dish on the top of the herrings, was about to remove the dinner appointments on the extemporised tray,—"do not you think Mrs. Brady ought to see a doctor?"

"I think it's time she saw somebody," agreed Susan.

"Would not it be well to send one of the men with a note to Mr. Hanlon, asking him to call?"

"It's no use," answered Susan shaking her head. "Mr. Hanlon he came up the day of the inquest; he had to come,

and after the crowner was gone he wanted to see mistress. In course, I asked him to step in here and told her, and you'd have thought she'd have taken my head off. I was glad enough to get out of the room. I would not like to be the one who should tell her Mr. Hanlon was here again."

"Why I thought she always liked him," said Grace fairly puzzled.

"I can't say for that, it was hard to tell who Mrs. Brady liked or did not like—she is a mighty secret woman in her ways, but the master hated him and forbid him the house. Most like she minds all that."

"Poor Nettie, how fond she must have been of him after all!" murmured Grace, speaking her thoughts out loud.

"Fond of the master, is it you mean!" asked Susan. "Fond of him; that she wasn't, that she could not be, I'll take my Bible oath. Why, Miss—" and in her energy she banged the herrings and superstructure on the table again—"he treated her worse nor a slave. If it had not been for the children, she'd have gone over and over and over again. I have seen it in her face when she has been sitting beside the fire, thinking, thinking; or when maybe she has left the room after giving him one look. He's gone and there's no need for us to send the bad word after him; but no black negro ever had a worse time of it than the woman that's now a widow; and whatever she is fretting about—and if I was you Miss, I would not trouble my head concerning that matter—it is not her murdered husband."

"I am afraid you are not fond of Mrs. Brady," suggested Grace. Perhaps the exact speech the unities might have suggested at such a crisis would not have been composed of the same or even similar words, but certainly an astute lawyer or a clever worldly woman would have put just the same question.

"An' saving your presence, Miss, who could be fond of her?" inquired Susan. "She's secret as the grave. He might beat or starve or blackguard her as he liked, and she answered never a word. Never to one did she come for pity or help. I have heard them say Miss, old women, not like me, that over and over again they wanted to talk with her about her trouble, and she put them back. She was that proud Miss, flesh and blood could not thole her."

"Proud," Grace repeated, and she looked at the room, she glanced at the table.

"Ay, just proud," was the answer; "folks are often as proud of the things they want to have as of those they have got, and if they can't get all they want they turn sulky, just —just as she did," finished Susan, and without leaving Grace time for a reply, she took up the herring-dish and its belongings and disappeared.

When an hour afterwards she returned to claim the table-cloth, Miss Moffat had vanished.

Over the fields she was gone to visit Mrs. Scott. Now making her way across a meadow where, as is the Irish fashion, the hay had been gathered into about twenty small stacks, hay ropes binding the grass together; now treading lightly between potatoe rigs, now skirting a field of oats or barley, she came at length by a different route to any she had heretofore traversed to the homestead of the Castle Farm.

Straight into the kitchen Grace walked. Upstairs she heard the sound of movement and voices, and upstairs after knocking vainly on the dresser she proceeded.

A stifled shriek was the first sound which greeted her, the next was,—

"Miss Grace, go down again into the open air. And may God Himself preserve you from all evil. We have got the faver."

Sound of dread in Ireland! If there be a cowardly spot in the nature of Irish men and women even at the present day, it is their blind, unreasoning dread of infection.

Reared amongst those who held this horror, Grace at sound of Mrs. Scott's news involuntarily drew back. Next instant she stood by Reuben's bedside.

The lad was dying. Even her inexperience grasped that; and falling on her knees and burying her face in the coverlet, she wept tears she had been longing to shed ever since she entered Maryville.

"Miss Grace," it was the mother who spoke and touched her, "ye can't save him. Why should ye kill yourself?"

"And you?" asked Grace, looking at mother and friend.

"We are in the hands of God," was the reply.

"So am I," said Miss Moffat, and took the lad's white fingers in her own.

"Who is attending him," she asked.

"Mr. Hanlon—who but him? He had a right to do all he could for us; and I'll say that, in his benefit, he has done it."

"Why was it his right?" asked Grace, ignoring all the rest of the sentence save that which jarred on her ear.

"Because him, and men like him, made the good man what—what— There, God help us, Miss Grace! Go away or you'll be hearing me raving worse than my poor lad did when first he lay bad, and likely be taken yourself."

"I am not afraid," said Grace, but she moved towards the door as she spoke. "Mrs. Scott, I shall see Amos to-morrow I hope; what am I to tell him?"

"Tell him what you've seen, Miss Grace."

"And what else?" asked her visitor.

"I don't just understand. Oh! yes, I do. Downstairs if you please, Miss. I'll follow you."

In the sunlight Grace waited for her to come down, and involuntarily as she looked at the flood of golden light in which the landscape was steeped, she could not help thinking that as the rain falleth on the just and the unjust, so the sun shines on the happy and the miserable.

Whilst she was vainly trying to solve this great problem of nature's lack of sympathy, Mrs. Scott joined her, keeping at a respectful distance.

"I know what you mean, Miss Grace," began the woman, who had grown old suddenly; "but, between you and me and him, it's no use talking of innocency if the other thing be guiltiness. He did it, and if I had been in his place I'd ha' done it myself."

These people—neither the man nor the woman—nor men nor women like them, were likely to take refuge in falsehood, and conviction entered Grace's heart at that moment. If Amos had sinned, he would have told how it all came about ere now. Had his been the hands that struck his enemy down he would have waited for no warrant but given himself up, and with obstinate honesty endured the consequences of his guilt.

Or it might be that in the natural terror induced by the accomplishment of such a deed, and the horror of the consequences certain to ensue, he would have fled. Either the sturdy endurance or the frantic fear would not have been out of keeping with the hard, stubborn, straightforward nature—but resolutely to maintain his innocence even to his own lawyer—to offer no explanation as to whether the blow was dealt in cold blood or after bitter altercation—Grace could not reconcile such a line of conduct with

anything she could remember of Scott, and out of the fulness of her heart she spoke, "As certainly as you stand there I believe Amos Scott never killed that man."

"Do you think you'll make a jury believe that, Miss Grace?" asked Mrs. Scott, holding a blue-checked apron to her face, down which tears were coursing. "Well, well—one trouble is almost driven out by another—when Reuben's gone, there'll be no one to think about but the master."

In this she chanced to be mistaken, however. When Reuben was gone, she herself lay fighting for dear life with the fever which had passed by her husband; leaving him, so most people said, for a worse fate than death by the visitation of God.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN THE NIGHT-WATCHES.

Before Miss Moffat had nearly reached Maryville Susan met her.

"It went out of my head, Miss," she began, "to tell you they had the fever at the farm. You have been there most like."

"Yes; and seen the lad who appears to be dying."

"What will we do now," asked Susan in an access of despair, "the children have come home?"

"Well, what of that?"

"What of that!" repeated the woman scornfully, "like as not you'll have brought the fever home in your clothes with you."

Grace stopped. It was a serious loss to her as a woman that she had never been with illness, and knew little or nothing about it, and now unwittingly she had run the risk of doing a very terrible wrong,—bringing infection into another person's house, amongst another person's children.

"Oh! I am so sorry," she exclaimed, unheeding the contemptuous infliction of Susan's voice; "what can we do; what ought I to do?"

"You had better take off your outside things, and give them to me to hang up in the air," was the reply uttered in a mollified tone. "I will bring down your wrapper; and then if you throw your other clothes into water, maybe no

harm will come of it. But don't go talking to the mistress till you've changed."

"I will not," promised Miss Moffat, and she tried to keep her word, for when Mrs. Brady called to her querulously, Grace answered,—

"Wait for a few minutes, I will be with you directly."

"I want you now."

"I cannot come. I have been to the Castle Farm, and Reuben is ill with fever; and I must get rid of all possible chance of carrying infection before I see any one."

"I do not care about infection," answered Nettie.

"Well, if you do not I do," retorted Grace, and she essayed to bolt her door; but as is not uncommon, even now in Ireland, all means of secure fastening were either broken or inoperative. "Dear Nettie," she went on, "do not come near me; for the sake of the children, if not for your own, keep away."

But Mrs. Brady resolutely had her will.

"Who did you see at the Castle Farm?" she asked.

"Mrs. Scott and Reuben. Nettie do be persuaded, and go away. If you or any of the children caught this fever, I should never forgive myself."

"We will not catch fever any one of us," answered Mrs. Brady. "I want to hear about the Scotts. What does Mrs. Scott say? You know what I mean.

"About Amos?" Grace suggested; "what can she say. Do not let us talk of it, Nettie."

"I must talk of it. Are you not going to see him, Grace?"

"Yes; but I did not intend to tell you."

"Why not? I want you to go. I want to hear every word he speaks to you."

"Nettie, you are ill," said Miss Moffat, noticing the flush on her friend's thin cheeks, the brightness of her eyes, and the parched dryness of her lips; "is there nothing you could fancy, dear; nothing I could get that might tempt you to eat?"

Mrs. Brady shook her head; then said with a faint smile,—

"I will try to eat something if you promise to tell me word for word all Amos says to you."

"How can I do so, you being what you are?" Grace replied.

"I am the most miserable wretch on earth," Nettie ex-

claimed. "My heart is breaking, Grace, and you will not do the simplest thing to try and ease it."

"Nettie dear, how can you ask me?" pleaded Miss Moffat. "I do not love you less because I refuse to betray any confidence the unhappy man may put in me."

"Do you think I want him hung?" inquired Nettie. "Do you think I should not be glad to hear he had got off safe? I tell you, if laying down my own life could procure his acquittal, I would cheerfully do it."

"You certainly must be insane," said Grace, with the quiet force of conviction; "however, to humour you I promise this, that I will repeat as much as I can of our conversation, although I should have thought this the very last subject on which you would have wished to hear me speak."

"Should you?" exclaimed Nettie. "Well, that only shows how mistaken even clever people may be sometimes. Hush! Here comes that woman!" and Mrs. Brady slipped back into her own room, closing the door softly behind her.

Faithful to her promise Nettie did try to swallow something, but the attempt proved almost a total failure.

"It chokes me, dear," she said almost humbly to her friend. "I wish—I wish I could have something to quiet me a little. Don't you think," she added wistfully, "that old Dr. Girvan, who has seen so many people in trouble, might think of something that would do me good?"

"He shall try," answered Grace; and she sent a messenger for him.

When the old man arrived he shook his head, called Nettie "poor girl"; felt her pulse, said the shock had been too much for her; advised that she should leave Maryville as soon as possible; expressed his intention of sending her a soothing mixture, and went away believing he understood Mrs. Brady's case.

"Ah!" said Nettie after he had gone, "if these doctors when they listen to our hearts' throbbing could only tell what is really passing in them, how we should dread their coming!"

"Dear, do try to keep yourself quiet," expostulated Grace, and Nettie obediently kept silence.

Another restless night, as Grace heard; so restless that Grace rose and taking the child Nettie had insisted on having to sleep with her away, put the little creature into

ner own bed, and kept watch by Mrs. Brady till the next morning.

"Grace," said the widow turning her face towards her friend, and stroking the hand that held hers so tenderly, "you are too good to me by far; but some day I do not think you will be sorry to remember all you have done for me."

"Darling, I am only too thankful to be able to do anything," was the reply, and Grace pillowed the once beautiful face upon her arm; and whilst Nettie slept fitfully, looked at the lines trouble had graven on the forehead she could remember, as if it were only a day previously, white and smooth and unmarked by even a trace of care.

Without much trouble Amos Scott's solicitor had been able to obtain permission for Miss Moffat to see her old friend. In Kilcurragh it was talked of as a nine days' wonder that a young lady of fortune and position should so far demean herself as to pay a visit to a common murderer; for according to general procedure the public had already tried and condemned the suspected man.

If people were not very much concerned about Mr. Brady's death, they were at least very greatly infuriated against Amos Scott.

"No man's life," they said, "would be safe if the farmer was allowed to get off,—if those who considered themselves injured were suffered to take the law into their own hands and revenge themselves as they pleased." With much more to the same effect, which Miss Moffat did not hear, and which would not have greatly affected her had she heard.

Never before had Grace felt so much shocked at the change a short time is capable of effecting as when she beheld Amos Scott.

He was worn almost to skin and bone; and there was a sad, weary, despairing look in his face that might well touch the heart of a woman who had known him in his prime of health and hope and prosperity.

There was a gentleness in his manner she had never perceived before. It seemed almost as though he had already passed through the gates of death and dropped the rude garments that concealed his finer and higher nature at the portals.

"Miss Grace; Miss Grace, why did you ever come to a

place like this," were his first words. "If the master had been alive he would not have suffered it."

"Very probably not," she answered. "He would have come for me in that case; now I am alone, I have no one."

"Why did you demean yourself for the likes of me?" he asked.

"I am not demeaning myself," she replied, "and I came to see you because, guilty or innocent, I cannot forget the past."

"I am not guilty, Miss Grace."

"On your solemn word, Amos."

"If I was standing before my Maker, face to face, as I believe I soon shall," he said rising, and lifting his hand reverently above his head, "I am not guilty in deed of the black villain's death. I do not go so far as to say," he went on, dropping his hand and resuming his seat, like one too weak to remain long standing, "I never wished him dead. I have often; and even now I can hardly feel sorry that he has been struck down. I have been a murderer in my heart, Miss Grace; I don't deny it. Many and many a night when I have been tramping home through the wet and the mud—empty of food and sick with sorrow,—I have thought if I could just hear he had taken the fever, or broken his neck, or been upset and drowned, I could have made myself content to leave the old place—and Ireland,—and go away to the country I said I never could thole to be banished to. But now," he added after an expressive pause, "I shall never have the chance; I shall never go anywhere but from here to the Court, and from the Court back here; and from here to——"

He covered his face. A man may be brave enough, and yet weak as a child when he tries to speak of an ordeal such as this.

For a minute Grace did not speak; she could not for the tears she was trying to restrain. Then she said, "Amos!" and he lifted his head.

"Yes, Miss Grace."

"Before God you are innocent?'

"I have said so once, Miss; there is no need of my saying so twice; for if you don't believe me at my first telling, you won't believe me at my second."

"I beg your pardon," she said gently, "I did believe you

the first time. I ought not to have tried to make assurance doubly sure. More than that, before I ever came here I felt you were innocent, and if it is possible for me to save you I will do it."

"Miss Grace," he answered, "you mean kindly, but you may be doing me a deadly hurt. I have been facing certain death since I came here, and its bitterness is almost past. If you drag me back, even for a bit, I must go through it all again."

It was a homely way of expressing the cruelty of raising false hopes; but Grace understood his meaning perfectly.

"I am rich," she faltered, feeling the error she had committed.

"Money won't do it," he answered.

"I have many friends possessed of influence."

"Influence can't save me. There is only one thing could help me, Miss Grace; and I need not trouble you with talking about that, because I know no more than the child still unborn who killed the man. I have sat here and gone over, and over, and over the story, and can make neither head nor tail of it. All I am sure of is, I had no act or part in the murder; and how my stick came to be where they say it was found is beyond me, for I lost it the night before; and I never was near the divisional road at all."

"What does Mr. D'Almarez say?" asked Miss Moffat."

"He says nothing, except 'tell me the truth,' as if a man in my strait would be likely to tell his attorney a lie?"

"And what does he think about your having lost your stick?"

"He just thinks I never lost it, because when he asked me about the places I had been the day before I couldn't mind. I have been that perplexed, Miss, since Lady Jane died, my memory won't serve as it used."

"But surely, Amos, with trying, you might recollect."

"I have minded a good many. I was at Rosemont to try to get speech of Mr. Robert; and at the office; and at the Glendare Arms, where a stranger man, seeing I was in trouble, treated me to a glass, bad luck to it! for I had not broken my fast, and the liquor got into my head; and I said things about Brady they're going to bring up again me at the trial; and then I stopped at a heap of places besides, but I can't mind just where, except at the last I called at Hanlon's surgery for some stuff for the lad. I didn't forget that,

because he went on at me for having had too much, and made me mad because he wouldn't believe me I had only had one glass to overcome me—me—who could once have taken off half-a-dozen without winking."

"And on the day of the——, on the day when Mr. Brady was killed?" Grace persisted.

"Well, Miss, I was that beat from the day before, I did not stir out till evening; and I would not have gone then, but the wife she would have me go to Kingslough and tell the doctor the boy was worse. So I went there and he was out, and I left my message; and in the ordinary way I should have come straight home, but I thought I would go round by Mark Lennon's, and tell his daughter we had a letter from him she's promised to; but before I got there I turned that bad and weak, I thought to make my home as fast as I could, and so came across the fields and the Red Stream; and they make that a charge against me too, Miss Grace, because, as you know, the colour of the clay there is the same as the colour of the clay in the water alongside the divisional where Brady was found."

In spirit, Grace groaned. She believed the man was speaking truly, but what jury on earth would believe it also! There was not a point in his favour. Every statement he made told against him. He could not say where he had been to lose it. He could not account for his time after he left Kingslough on the night of the murder. As to the place where he got the mud found on his clothes, there was only his own word, and of what value is the word of an accused man. Even his own wife imagined him guilty. No one in the world, save Grace Moffat, imagined it within the bounds of possibility that, though circumstantial and internal evidence were all against him, he might yet be innocent; and it was just on the board that had she lived in Ireland for the previous twelve months, and seen his animus to Mr. Brady growing day by day, she might have believed him guilty too.

"All I can say," she remarked, as she rose to leave, "is this; you shall have the best counsel money can procure."

"Thank you kindly, Miss," he answered, "but, as I said before, money can't do it, and man can't do it, let him be the best ever stepped in shoe leather; and if God does not do it, and in these later days, as our minister used to say, he has not seen fit to work visible miracles, I must suffer, Miss Grace; that is all. I have made my mind up to that now

he is dead, as I never could to giving up the farm while he was living."

"Amos," said Miss Moffat, "do not let what your minister said impress you too much. God does work miracles, or what seem miracles to us; and if he sees fit he will clear you from this."

"And if He does not see fit, Miss Grace, I must just thole what He sends; that is all. You can say that to the wife if you have a chance. Do you happen to know, Miss, how it is with Reuben?"

For a moment Grace faltered; then she said,—

"Whatever else you are spared to see in this world I am afraid——" she paused, and he calmly finished the sentence.

"I won't see him. Well then, Miss, it may be we shall meet all the sooner, Reuben and me, when he will know that wrongfully blood-guiltiness was laid to my charge."

Mr. D'Almarez made no secret of his chagrin at the result of this interview, and it taxed his politeness sorely to listen to Miss Moffat's account of it with ordinary patience.

He had hoped that to her Scott would speak openly. He had expected to obtain some information which might bring the crime under the head of accident rather than design, and enable him to fight for a verdict of manslaughter instead of murder. It was known to every one in the country that Mr. Brady had not treated the man well; and if Scott could only be got to state what actually passed on the last occasion he and his enemy ever met, the lawyer felt something might be done, supposing the blow had been struck without premeditation, and that high and passionate words had preceded it.

If a jury could be argued or coaxed into believing Scott did not leave his home with the deliberate intention of murdering Mr. Brady, the man's chance was by no means hopeless; and there was this in his favour, that the owner of Maryville had actually on the day of the murder started to go to Dublin, although for some unexplained reason he failed to continue his journey, so that it was unlikely Scott could have expected to meet him near the Castle Farm.

On the other hand, it was against the accused that he knew Mr. Brady intended to eject him from the house—that he had publicly stated, "Brady should never come into it alive," and that he expressed his intention of sticking to the old place even if it was pulled down about his ears.

Still, considering what Mr. Brady had been, and the

amount of fancied or real injury he inflicted on Amos, considering that the one man had always been a dishonest reprobate, and the other a hard-working, decent, well-conducted fellow, who never cheated a neighbour of a halfpenny; that he had a son down in fever, and children clamouring for bread; that he might well be nearly distraught with want of food, and mental anguish; considering what a picture a clever barrister might fill in from these outlines, Mr. D'Almarez did not despair of doing something for Scott, if only he could be induced to confess. And now it seemed he did not intend to confess; and the lawyer, chafing with irritation, had to sit and listen to a woman's maunderings about innocence and Scott's religious utterances and other matters of the same kind, all of which Mr. D'Almarez mentally summed up in one word, "Rubbish!"

"It is all very well, Miss Moffat," he said, when she finished, "for Scott to talk goody twaddle—excuse the expression—to a lady or a parson; but that sort of thing will not go down with a judge or a jury. He mistakes his position; the period has not yet arrived for that kind of conversation. Time enough for religious exercises when he has done with lawyers and been turned over to the chaplain. You must pardon my plain speaking. The only hope there is of saving Scott lies with himself, and if he will persist in trying to hoodwink me and playing at this foolish game of hide-and-seek with his own attorney, I am afraid there is not a chance of saving him."

"But, Mr. D'Almarez," pleaded Grace, "suppose the man has nothing to tell, suppose he is not guilty, suppose he has really tried to make his peace with God, expecting nothing from man, and that every word he said to me to-day were true, the natural expression of a broken and a contrite heart, in which not a hope, so far as this world is concerned, still lingers?"

The lawyer smiled. It was very right and proper, of course, for a lady to talk in this strain, but it was a style of conversation for which he himself did not care, and very possibly had Miss Moffat been older and uglier and poorer, he might not have listened to it even with the amount of politeness he evinced.

"I cannot suppose an impossibility," he answered. "Your own kindness of disposition and Scott's solemn assertions have, you must allow me to say, blinded your

judgment. If you exercise it you will understand that it is a simple impossibility for Scott to be innocent. He may be innocent of intentional murder, and that is the only point we can try to make in his favour, but his hands are not clean in the matter as he tries to make us believe.

"Remember the hatred he entertained for Mr. Brady, recollect all he had suffered through him, recall the expressions he was habitually in the practice of using concerning him, the threats he uttered not farther back than the day before the murder, and then pass on to the murder itself. Mr. Brady is found dead in a lonely road leading straight to the Castle Farm. He has been killed by a blow, and that blow is not disputed must have been dealt by a stick, and that stick one belonging to Scott, which is found at a little distance as if flung away in a panic. According to Scott's own account he was not in the divisional road at all that night, and yet it was the most direct route back from Mr. Hanlon's, where he admits he called. He says he started to go round by Lennon's, but he never went there. He says he lost his stick on the previous day, but he does not know where or how, and he cannot even remember the places at which he stopped, or whether he missed his stick before his return home, or whether he ever missed it till it was found after the murder.

"Further, admitting he did lose it, there is no particular reason why he should not have found it again. Nor does the evidence against him stop even at this point. It is certain his clothes were wet, and stained with clay of a reddish colour. The banks and bed of the stream running beside the divisional road are, as you know, of that description. Depend upon it, Miss Moffat, Scott is throwing away the best chance by persisting in silence. Nothing in my opinion really can serve him except opening his mouth."

"I admit the truth and reason of all you say," she replied, "but faith is sometimes stronger than reason, and I have faith Scott is not guilty."

"Unfortunately a jury have to decide on facts, not faith," said Mr. D'Almarez rising to take his leave. "Of course I shall do all in my power for him, and if he is found guilty we must try to prevent his being hung; but I really think if he would only have placed full confidence in me we might have got him off with only a sentence of manslaughter. Perhaps he may still think better of it."

"No," Grace answered, "I do not think he will—I hope he cannot. If after what he said to me to-day he were to confess that he did cause Mr. Brady's death I should never be able to believe any one again."

"Ah! Miss Moffat, you do not know how great the temptation is to tell a falsehood if one is afraid of telling the truth. I do not quarrel wlth his statements on the ground of morality, but only on that of common sense; but then that is a lawyer's way of looking at such things. It is not to be expected that a lady should take the same view. I trust it may all turn out better than I anticipate."

Miss Moffat drove back to Maryville in a very sad and perplexed state of mind; she had seen none of her friends at Kilcurragh, except that one at whose house her interview with Mr. D'Almarez took place, and she had no desire to see them. Amos Scott's position would, she knew, be the prominent topic of interest, and she did not possess sufficient moral courage to desire to combat popular opinion single-handed.

The more she thought about the matter the more conclusive seemed the lawyer's statements.

Notwithstanding her own determined advocacy she felt that away from Amos her belief in his innocency was not strong enough to enable her to discard the extremely ugly doubts raised in her mind by Mr. D'Almarez's statement of the case.

Scott might believe that his sole chance of escape lay in reiteration of his innocence, and if this were so Miss Moffat felt she could forgive his falsehood. What she could not forgive, however, was his religious hypocrisy, supposing his statement untrue, and with feminine impetuosity she rushed to this conclusion—

"If Amos be guilty he is the worst man in the world."

As there had been nothing in the conversation of a confidential nature Grace repeated it to Mrs. Brady, merely omitting Scott's remarks about the dead man.

In silence Nettie listened to the end; then she asked,—

"Are you sure he said he could not remember where he left that stick?"

"Yes; he cannot even recollect where he went the day he lost it."

"That seems strange, does not it?"

"I think not, if you consider what he has gone through.

He looks starved, and ill, and bewildered. Oh! Nettie, the Scotts must have suffered terribly."

"I suppose so," said Mrs. Brady absently, as she sat looking out of the window with sad, weary, wistful eyes; and finding she showed no desire to continue the subject, her friend let it drop. Suddenly, however, Nettie rose, threw her clasped hands above her head, and, with a sigh which was almost a groan, hurriedly left the room.

Miss Moffat had become too much accustomed to these demonstrations of restlessness or grief, or whatever else the cause might be, to attach much importance to them, but still she thought it better to follow Nettie, whom she found in her own room sobbing as if her heart would break.

Grace softly closed the door, and left her.

"Let her cry, poor thing," she thought. "It will do her good. After all, no matter what he may have been, he was her husband."

For the first time since her return to Ireland Grace that night slept soundly; slept a sleep unbroken by dreams; undisturbed by the perplexities that troubled her waking moments.

How long she had been in bed she could not tell, but at length from this depth of unconsciousness she was slowly aroused by little fingers that spread themselves over her face and hair, by a childish voice crying,—

"Oh! lady, please waken, please, please do."

Thus entreated, the "lady," for by this name Nettie's more especial favourite had elected to call Miss Moffat, struggled back to a due remembrance of where she was.

"What is it?" she asked between sleeping and waking.

"Mam-ma, oh? Mam-ma she frightens Minnie," explained the little one.

With an effort Grace roused herself fully.

"Minnie darling, is that you?" she asked, taking the child in her arms. "What has frightened you?"

"Mam-ma," repeated the shrill treble. "She talks so funnily——"

In an instant Grace had on her slippers and dressing-gown.

"I will go to your mam-ma, dear," she said; "but you must be very good and stay quietly here and go to sleep."

Then she laid the little creature's head on her own pillow, folded the sheet under her chin, gave her a parting kiss, and went into the next room, closing the door behind her.

Dawn was just breaking, and without striking a light, Grace walked over to where Mrs. Brady lay, moaning and tossing, muttering words too indistinct to catch.

"Nettie," and her friend shook her vigorously; "Nettie,"—but no sign of recognition came. "Nettie dear, do speak to me," not a word of reply was uttered.

For a moment Miss Moffat stood helpless, then she went to that part of the house where she supposed Susan slept.

"I am so sorry to disturb you," she said, after awaking the woman, with that courtesy which was a part of her nature when addressing those below her rank, "but I fear Mrs. Brady is very ill. Do you think you could go to the house of one of the men and send him for Dr. Girvan?"

"What is the matter with her?" asked the woman brusquely.

"I cannot tell; she is moaning and restless and does not seem to know me in the least."

"It's the fever, God help us," said Susan. "I'll waste no time, but go for the doctor myself."

"What! in the middle of the night?" exclaimed Grace.

"Ay, just as soon as if it was in the middle of the day," she answered, and proved as good as her word.

It was a long walk and a lonely to Kingslough, but Susan accomplished it, and brought back Doctor Girvan by the time the sun was rising.

Miss Moffat went down to speak to him, and asked Susan to stop with her mistress for a few minutes while she did so. Then the doctor said he would see the patient; and as Grace walked up and down the once neglected garden trifling away the time, he went into Mrs. Brady's room, the servant crossing him on the threshold.

He remaind there a quarter of an hour or more, and when she met him Miss Moffat saw he looked ill at ease.

"Do you think there is anything serious the matter with her?" she asked anxiously.

"I cannot tell—yet," he replied. "You have been with her all night?" he said interrogatively.

"Yes, since I first knew she was ill."

"No one must go into the room but yourself and me."

"Why not?"

"You will know time enough. Amos Scott never murdered her husband at all."

"Then who did?"

"If you listen she will tell you."

And Doctor Girvan, looking grey and old and haggard in the morning light, drove away so utterly amazed and horror-stricken at Mrs. Brady's ravings that he forgot, if the fever were infectious, Miss Moffat stood a very fair chance of catching it herself.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

TWO INTERVIEWS.

It was a heavy oppressive afternoon—over Maryville a storm was brooding—the leaden sky seemed almost to touch the tops of the dark trees that hemmed in the house and grounds so closely that they might well have been likened to prison walls; not a sound within or without broke the stillness; in the fields the cattle lay panting with the heat; in the woods the birds kept silence, listening perhaps for the first roll of thunder, following swift after the leaping lightning.

It was a day to take the spirit out of any one, and Grace Moffat, as she sat alone in the large drawing-room, still insufficiently furnished, though some attempt had been made to fill its emptiness, felt miserable and depressed to a degree of utter wretchedness.

She had made up her mind what she ought to do, but she still hesitated and shivered at the idea of doing it. Nettie had been seriously ill for two days, and there could be no question that, although her malady had been at first merely inflammation of the brain, her disease was now complicated with the fever raging at the Castle Farm.

But Grace did not care for that—a new horror had cast out the old. If she had only been able to shake off the last task set for her, she would cheerfully have run the risk of contracting a dozen fevers; she had entreated Doctor Girvan to take it out of her hands, but he shook his head.

"Leave it till she gets better; there is time enough," he said, but Grace knew there was not time enough—that what she had to do ought to be done at once.

Sometimes she thought of writing to Lord Ardmorne and requesting his advice and assistance in the matter; but having learnt all she knew through the delirious utterances

of an unconscious woman, she felt herself charged with the weight of a fearful secret, which she was bound in love and honour to bear alone.

As for her tending Nettie without assistance, Dr. Girvan's medical sense had told him any such proceeding was impracticable,· quite as soon as Grace's common sense had told her the same thing.

Without going through the ceremony of consulting him, Miss Moffat had despatched a messenger for her own little maid, mentioned once before in these pages.

"I want you to help me nurse Mrs. Brady, who is ill with FEVER," she wrote. "If you are afraid, do not come."

Back with the messenger, bundle in hand, came Nancy, trim and pretty as ever, radiant with delight at seeing her former mistress once more.

"What did your mother say, Nancy?" asked Grace, looking at the bright young face not without a certain feeling of remorse for having brought it to a house where death might be lurking for its owner.

"Say, Miss—nothing, to be sure; wasn't I coming to you!"

Miss Moffat walked to the window and back again, thinking in what form of words to tell the girl what she wanted with her.

"Nancy," she began, "if it had been only to nurse Mrs. Brady I required help, I would never have asked you to help me. Plenty of women older and more experienced than you could have been found for such a duty, but what I really require is a person whom I can trust to keep silence. I want you to promise me that to no human being now or hereafter—unless I give you leave—you will ever mention a word of what you may hear in Mrs. Brady's room."

"I'll be true to you, Miss Grace, what you bid me I will do; it's my right and my pleasure too."

Nancy had not been ten minutes installed in the sick room before Susan asked to speak a word with Miss Moffat.

"Now that you're getting your own servants here, Miss," she began, "you'll likely not be wanting me any longer, and I just want to say I'll go without any telling, if you like."

"I am not getting my own servants here," said Miss Moffat, bewildered at the sudden turn affairs had taken. "I do not want to meddle with the arrangements of any other person's house; but I cannot nurse Mrs. Brady alone,

you must know that, and I want to have some one with me I can trust."

"You might have trusted me, Miss," said the woman, with smouldering fire in her dark eyes. "The Lord knows you might. Even though you have done this thing and brought a stranger to this sorrowful house, man nor woman shouldn't wring from me what I know, nor——" she added after a pause, devoted possibly to conjuring up an effective finish to her sentence, "wild horses shouldn't tear it. I never did like the mistress, for all her pretty face and quiet ways; but I came nearer liking her the other morning than ever I did before, when I found out how the trouble had been eating in like rust, when I heard her letting out everything she would have bitten her tongue off before she would have spoken in her right mind. It was her silence always beat me; but I'd have nursed her better than that slip of a thing can do, and I'd have died, Miss, before I let on she had been talking of anything beyond the common."

Miss Moffat stood silent for a moment, then she said,—

"I think open speaking is always a good thing. So far as I am concerned I should be quite willing to trust you. I have been so sure of your good faith, I never asked whether Mrs. Brady had been talking strangely after I left her and went down to Dr. Girvan, but—I do not want to hurt your feelings—how was it possible for me to let you nurse her? Do not imagine I am setting myself up as a judge of you or anybody else; all I ask is, if you had been in her place should you have liked such an arrangement yourself?"

The woman did not answer direct, but she broke forth,—

"Do you want me to leave? I was fond of the children. I did my best by them, I am doing all I know how now."

"No," Miss Moffat replied; "I do not want you to leave; at present, I may tell you, it would inconvenience me beyond expression if you were to do so. When Mrs. Brady is better, no doubt she will wish you to go. I say this frankly, but when that day comes, if you want a chance for the future, if you want to wipe out the past and try to make a better thing of the rest of your life, I will help you."

This time the answer came quick and sharp. "If there were more ladies like you, there would be fewer women like me," said the poor sinful creature; her assurance vanquished, her insolence gone,—and, throwing her apron over

her head, she went along the stone passage leading to the kitchen, sobbing—sobbing every step of the way.

Which evidence of contrition touched Miss Moffat beyond expression, and gave her much hope concerning Susan's future. She had learned many things during the previous twelve months, but she had still to be taught that repentance for past errors is not by any means a guarantee for future good behaviour; that the tears wept over a crime committed and irrevocable, dry up almost as soon as shed, and form no lake of bitterness across which humanity finds almost insuperable difficulty in steering to another sin.

Nevertheless, to be done with the subject, it may as well be here stated that Miss Moffat's generosity and Susan's impressibility between them bore good fruits.

The woman sinned no more. To the end of her life she was perhaps scarcely a desirable person to know, but she married respectably a man who was acquainted with her antecedents, and the pair migrated to a strange country, where their children and their children are working their way to name and fortune.

So goes the world—the busy, busy world we live in. How would the Puritan Fathers have looked upon the man who should marry a woman notable for antecedents such as these?

Still Grace sat looking out at the funereal trees, at the garden full of flowers,—the common sweet-scented perennial flowers,—which made many an otherwise poor home so rich in colour and perfume before the present bedding-out system was invented by ingenious and enterprising nurserymen,—still she cast an occasional glance at the threatening sky; her thoughts divided the while between the murdered man who lay in a quiet little burying ground amongst the hills,—his day ended while it was still high noon, his power for evil over, his ability to vex and distress gone,—and the person who had dealt the blow which silenced the beating of that wicked heart, ended all its schemes, plots, hopes, purposes for ever.

As yet she had not written to Mr. D'Almarez; she had done nothing but think what had best be attempted in the matter—what it was possible to perform.

As to allowing things to remain as they were till Nettie got better, she put that idea aside as out of the question. To Doctor Girvan it appeared the only course to pursue;

but then he shrank from responsibility. He was old, broken, feeble, and possessed of little moral courage; all his life long his *rôle* had been to know nothing, and pass from house to house leaving the secrets of each behind him, and why should he mix himself up with trouble and mischief now; or allow Miss Moffat to mix herself up in such an affair, if he could avoid doing so?

Grace, on the contrary, blamed herself for having permitted her own fears and disinclination to take so serious a responsibility on her own shoulders to influence her for such a length of time.

"If I can keep my own share in the transaction secret," she thought, "I should like to do so; but if not, and that unpleasant consequences ensue, I shall face them bravely as I am able. I wonder whether I could be punished. I wish I dare ask Mr. D'Almarez. Shall I write and put the question to Mr. Nicholson? No, I must wait no longer, whatever comes of it; no more time ought to be lost."

At this moment some one knocked gently on the panel of the drawing-room door, and thinking it could only be Susan or Mary, Miss Moffat said, "Come in," without turning her eyes from the window.

Next moment, however, some indescribable feeling impelled her to look round, and there, standing in the open doorway, like a picture in a frame, was a tall bearded man, who appeared as much astonished to see her as she was at sight of him.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "but I expected to find Mrs. Brady here. I asked for her, and the servant pointed to this door."

"Mrs. Brady is dangerously ill," Grace replied; "with fever," she added, seeing the stranger advance into the room; then a second's doubt and hesitation, and she exclaimed, holding out her hand,—

"Why, it must be John Riley!"

"And you," he said, after an almost imperceptible pause, "must be Miss Moffat, though I should scarcely have known you."

"I have had little rest and much anxiety since I returned to Ireland," she answered, as if apologizing for the change in her appearance.

He smiled gravely; it was not the right time, and he was not the right person, to tell her she had altered almost

beyond his recognition, merely because she was now the most beautiful woman he had ever met.

"I thought you were in England," he said, putting aside the difficulty by changing the subject.

"So I was," she replied, "until very lately. I came over here directly I heard about Mr. Brady, and I am glad I did come, for Mrs. Brady is very lonely and very ill. And that reminds me you ought not to stay here."

"Why not?"

"For fear of infection."

"I have lived in a climate where fever is so common people forget to fear it," he said.

"But Mrs. Riley and your sisters have not," she suggested.

"I am not staying at Woodbrook," he answered. "I am at Lakemount, and the long ride back there will rid me of infection if I catch any here."

Not at Woodbrook! Time was when Grace would have asked him the why and the wherefore of such an extraordinary proceeding, but she could not do this now. Neither could he tell her what a grievous disappointment his return home had proved; how terrible that life of shortness, meanness, discontent, complaining, had seemed to him after the wider and nobler career his Indian experience had opened to him. He had done for his family all a man could, and his family were dissatisfied with his efforts. Not merely were affairs no better than when he went away, but they were infinitely worse. The amount of the mortgage was increased, the land was deteriorated in value, the houses and cottages were dilapidated, and in many cases almost falling to ruin, whilst Woodbrook itself gave evidence at every turn, of neglect, shortness of money, lack of spirit to improve, lack of will to make the best of a bad position, lack of faith that time and patience and energy might work wonders in the way of repairing even the shattered fortunes of the Riley family.

Naturally, when absent, a man forgets the failings of those belonging to him, if indeed he ever knew them; and perhaps there is no greater trial than for a person to return to the home of his youth to find it and the people it contains different from the ideal, experience of the world has been gradually working up for him.

But these were things of which John Riley could not speak

to any one. Right glad had he been to accept Lord Ardmorne's invitation, and leave Woodbrook for Lakemount.

"Deserting his own flesh and blood," said Mrs. Riley.

"It does not seem to me that his own flesh and blood made things very pleasant for him," observed the General, his old spirit roused at the implied blame to his son.

Mr. John Riley's visit to Maryville was prolonged perforce; for he had not been seated many minutes before a flash of lightning, followed by a loud sullen peal of thunder, announced that the storm so long threatened had come.

During the time he remained he spoke of little, except Nettie; her position and her future prospects. He had been informed there was no will, and that, consequently, the eldest son taking the freehold property, Mrs. Brady's share of her late husband's estate would probably be small.

"But, of course, all the children being young, she will have an allowance for their support," finished Mr. Riley.

"Money," thought Grace, "money again."

Had any one put the question, however, to Miss Moffat, how people are in this world to live without money, she might have been slightly puzzled to tell them.

"If there is any way in which I can be of assistance to Mrs. Brady, I should regard it as a great kindness if you would let me know," said Mr. Riley, when at length he rose to go.

In her friend's name Grace thanked him, and then he went on,—

"You have warned me against this fever, Miss Moffat; but are you not running a terrible risk yourself in the matter?"

"No," she answered; "I shall not take it."

"How can you be certain of that?" he asked.

"I have a perfect conviction on the subject," she said. "It is not intended I should have fever at present."

"Are you a fatalist?" inquired Mr. Riley.

"On some points, yes," she replied, and then he went; and Grace from an upper window watched him ride slowly away down the avenue, till the gloomy trees, dripping wet from the late storm, hid him from her sight.

For one second after she first recognized him, she had felt tempted to show her burden to this man who had once loved her, and ask him to take its weight and its responsibility. Only for one second. The formal Miss Moffat

with which he addressed her cast her half-formed resolution to the winds.

How could she tell anything of the weary days, months, years, in which he had been schooling himself to forget the old familiar name, and think and speak of her only as Miss Moffat ?

How could she, who had never loved him, understand the shock, the surprise, the misery, the pleasure, that sudden meeting had proved to him ! How was it possible for her to comprehend anything save that he was changed, that the John Riley of her childish and girlish recollection was gone as utterly as the years which were past!

Dimly and yet certainly, watching his figure as it slowly disappeared, Grace grasped the truth, that when she refused him that evening, while the scent of summer flowers was around them, and the sea rippled in on the shore, she killed the John Riley she had known so long—been associated with so intimately.

That John was dead and buried ; and the John Riley, with the bronzed face and erect figure and bushy beard, who had answered her greeting so formally, was another man.

Over this interview, however, Grace had not much time to think. Another was impending that occupied her mind to the exclusion of almost every other topic.

" Shall I put it off ?" she thought ; " the lanes will be wet and the grass soaking." And then she put the temptation from her.

" It must be done. Supposing I were to catch this fever, who would there be to see justice done ; to save them both, if possible ?"

If possible ; she shivered at the suggestion contained in the words.

She went to her room, in a different part of the house from where Nettie lay ; and putting on her travelling-dress, an old bonnet and coarse shawl she had found belonging to Mrs. Brady, looked in the glass to see if in the dusk she might hope to pass through Kingslough unrecognized.

" With a thick veil I think I shall be safe." she said ; and then she took off the shawl, carrying it over her arm, and put a thick lace fall in her pocket, and taking the key of a side-door with her, passed through one of the drawing-room windows into the gardens, and so made her way unobserved out of the grounds of Maryville.

Once in the fields of Castle Farm she knew every inch of the country, and this knowledge enabled her to reach, by unfrequented roads and by-paths, that part of the shore lying beneath the hill on which Ballylough Abbey stood.

There on a great piece of rock she sat down to rest, and wait till the twilight deepened and darkened.

When it was fairly dusk she resumed her walk, still along the beach, never entering Kingslough till she reached the further end of the town, whence through narrow lanes and back streets she arrived at Mr. Hanlon's surgery.

Her hand trembled so much at first that she could not pull the bell. At last she heard it tinkle, and to her great relief the door was opened by Mr. Hanlon in person.

"I wish to speak to you, if you please," she said, in a voice so low and quivering, that the poor attempt she made to disguise it was unnecessary.

"Certainly; come in."

"In private," she suggested.

"You have come to tell me some great secret, I suppose," he remarked jocularly; desiring, apparently, to put his timid patient at her ease. "Go in there," he added, pointing to a parlour beyond the surgery, where he had no doubt been reading, for a lamp stood on the table, and a book lay open near it. "Now what is it?" he went on, placing a chair for his visitor, and taking one for himself.

She did not speak, but turned her head in the direction of the door of communication which he had left ajar.

"If you wish it, by all means," he said, answering that look, and he rose and not only shut but locked it.

"Now, what have you to tell me," he asked.

She put back her veil and looked him straight in the face.

As she did so, he shrank as though he had received a blow, and every particle of colour left him.

"Miss Moffat!" he exclaimed. "You in Ireland?"

"Yes; at Maryville," was her reply. "Now, you know why I am here."

"Wait a minute," he said, and unlocking the door passed out into his surgery. He was not a man addicted to stimulants. Even in these days he would have been accounted abstemious, and for those times when temperance had scarcely established itself as a virtue, he was reckoned, amongst wild young fellows who knew no better, and old ones who ought

to have known better, a milksop who was "afraid to take his liquor because he could not carry it."

Now, however, he unlocked the cupboard, and pouring himself out half a tumbler of raw spirit, swallowed it at a gulp; then he went back and said,—

"No, Miss Moffat, I do not know why you are here; though I can guess why you might have sent some one else."

"Who else might I have sent?" she inquired.

"Why there is only one thing now to do, is there?" he retorted.

"What is that?"

"Give me up, as I have lacked courage to give myself up," he said desperately.

"Then you do not deny it?" she said.

"Deny it! Why should I deny it? Have not I known it must come to this some time? Have I ever ceased cursing my own vacillation in not going straight away to the inspector here, and telling him the whole story? People might have believed me then; but they will never believe me now."

There was a moment's silence which he broke by asking,—

"How did you get to know about this, Miss Moffat?"

"Mrs. Brady is too ill to keep many secrets," was the reply.

"Ill! what is the matter with her?" he hurriedly inquired.

"Fever."

"Who is attending her?"

"Doctor Girvan."

"The old dotard will kill her, he exclaimed.

"He will do no such thing," answered Grace sharply. "Doctor Girvan will no more kill Mrs. Brady than you have killed Reuben Scott. If she dies, it can only be because God willed she was to do so, not because she has lacked attention. Nevertheless," added Grace reflectively, "I should have had further advice, only I feared——"

"Do not let that consideration influence you any longer," he said, "I shall give myself up in the morning."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because there is nothing else to do," he answered with a bitter laugh. "Because the game is played out, and I may as well throw down the cards as have them taken out of my hands."

"Shall I tell you what you ought to do?" asked Miss Moffat.

"If you will be so good."

She took no notice of the mocking defiance of his tone, the recklessness of his manner with which he tried to cover the abject despair that was mastering him; but went on, gathering courage as she proceeded,—

"You ought to leave Kingslough at once. Scott can be saved without you; and Mrs. Brady's name should be kept out of this miserable affair altogether."

"She is innocent," he said. "Tell me any form of words I can employ, sufficiently strong to assure you of that, and I will use them."

Instinctively Grace drew back from the subject. "I am very certain she is innocent," she replied. "I require no assurance on that point from any one."

"I beg your pardon and hers," he answered; more humbly than he had yet spoken. "You are quite right, Miss Moffat," he continued, after a moment's pause. "If I stay here I might not be able to save my own life. If I go I shall spare her—perhaps."

"There is no perhaps in it. The greatest kindness you can do Mrs. Brady is to leave here at once."

"Leave, to be brought back," he said. "Fly, to make my return all the worse?"

"There is no occasion for you to be brought back," she urged. "There is plenty of time for you to make your way to some country where you may be safe for the rest of your life."

"There is no time," he said; "once Scott's innocence is declared, the law will be on my track like a bloodhound."

"I have thought it all over," she persisted. "Scott's trial can, I am persuaded, be put off. Up to the present time, it may be supposed, no one knows anything of this except yourself and Mrs. Brady. Mrs. Brady is too ill to give evidence. Weeks must elapse before she can be questioned. Make use of those weeks. Go away as if for a visit, and stay away."

He put his elbows on the table and covered his face with his hands, and, as in some nightmare, the whole of his life passed in review before him. It had opened with such fair prospects; and behold, this was the end! He had hoped to win wealth, women's smiles, golden opinions from his fel-

lows; and the end, was a choice of two alternatives:—to remain, and, if he escaped the gallows, be sentenced to transportation, most probably for life; or to escape, and lead a fugitive existence, under an assumed name, for the rest of his days.

He thought of the sacrifices his father had made for him; he thought of the castles his mother had built with her son's fame, or her son's talent, or her son's greatness for the foundation-stone of each; he thought of how proud he had felt of his own gifts; of how certain he had been of achieving success; and now he let his hands drop and looked at Miss Moffat with a face so white, so haggard, so aged, so hopeless, that Grace was forced to turn her eyes away. She could not bear to look upon a wreck so sudden and so complete.

"You ought not to be staying here," he said, in a choking voice and with an evident effort. "You came by the shore, I suppose? You would not mind, perhaps, if I asked leave to walk part of the way back with you. I mean, you would not feel—afraid."

"Afraid!" she only spoke that one word, but it was enough. He could feel there were tears and sorrow, and compassion and regret in her tone; tears, sorrow, compassion, and regret for him.

"If you will walk slowly along the beach I will follow you," he said. "I—I want to tell you how it all happened."

She bowed her head in acquiescence, drew the veil over her face once more, and passed out silently into the night.

She had not walked more than halfway to Ballylough Head before he was at her side.

Without waiting for him to speak, she said,—

"I do not know, Mr. Hanlon, whether you have a sister."

Under the circumstances it seemed to him a curious question, but he answered,—

"I have."

"Before you tell me anything, I want to know if I may, without giving you offence, speak to you as your sister if she were here might, and would?"

"If one of my sisters were speaking to me now," he replied, "she would not, I am very sure, find much to say that was pleasant. They have built their hopes on me, and now—but go on, Miss Moffat, say anything you like, no matter how true it may be, I will try to bear it."

"You mistake me a little, I think," she said; "all I

meant was that if a sister found her brother in a sore strait as you are now, she would speak to him with no more reserve than I am about to do. Ever since I knew of this matter I have been thinking how it will be best for you to get away; what it will be best for you to do when you have got away. I suppose I am right in imagining you might find a difficulty in finding the means at once for a long journey."

"I have done very well at Kingslough," he replied, "and if I could only sell my practice, and I had an offer for it not long since, I should have no difficulty in going to the uttermost ends of the earth."

"Yes, but by the time you had sold your practice it might be too late. If you can get any friend to take your place while you go away apparently for a holiday, you had better leave everything just as it is at this moment. Woman's wit is quick, Mr. Hanlon, if it be not very profound, and my wit tells me every hour you lose in quitting Kingslough may prove nearer—nearer—that which we all want to avert. I have very little money here, but I can send you a letter which will enable you to get all you may require. You are not offended I hope?" she went on hurriedly; "I know you cannot escape without sufficient money to do so, and it will be the happiest day of my life when I hear you have got safely out of the country."

All the manhood which was in him rebelled against having to accept such help as this; and for a moment he bared his head and let the cool night wind play upon his temples to relieve the pain which seemed tearing his brain to pieces. Never had Theophilus Hanlon seemed such a poor creature to himself before; no,—not even when he fled from the side of the man he had murdered; never had he been thoroughly humbled in his own estimation previously. If she had loved him; if he could only for one moment have flattered himself she cared for him more than the most ordinary acquaintance, the stab might not have pierced so deep.

As it was, he felt the wound was bleeding internally, and that it would continue to bleed at intervals throughout all the years to come.

"I have offended you," she said. "Pardon my want of tact. I did not mean to hurt your feelings."

"Hurt my feelings!" he repeated; in the interval during which he remained silent he had tested the truth of each

word she said, and admitted, reluctantly it might be, but still certainly, that without such help as she offered, liberty and he might shake hands and part for ever. "Hurt my feelings! When a man has done what I have done, when he has failed to do what I have failed to do, he may reasonably be supposed to have no feelings to hurt. And yet, Miss Moffat," he went on, "I will be frank with you; just for a moment your offer cut me. It is so hard—oh! my God," he broke out in a passion of agony, "what had I ever done that such a trouble should come upon me!"

"Hush!" said Grace. It seemed to her excited fancy as if in the darkness his voice must travel more swiftly than in the light, to the Throne of Him whose justice and righteousness he questioned. "What have any of us done that trouble should not come? But in our eyes it does appear hard," she went on. "If you like—if it will not pain you—tell me how it all came about."

"I do not know how it began," he answered. "I supposed no one ever does. I could no more tell you how it was I came to care for Mrs. Brady than I could tell you how the grass grows, or the sea ebbs and flows. One thing, however, I do know, she never cared for me; never in that way. If she had, I should not be talking to you here now; if she had we would have been far away from Ireland long ago. I did not intend to tell her about it," he continued, "but one day it slipped out; and then she turned round and laughed in my face, such a mocking, despairing, forsaken sort of laugh, it rung in my ears for many a week after.

"'Keep that for the next young girl you meet, Mr. Hanlon,' she said, 'who knows no better. I have heard it all before. Do you suppose I should ever have left my home, poor as it was, and my friends, few as they were, if he had not first thrown that glamour over me? A woman cannot be deceived twice; and there is no vow you or anybody else could swear, no temptation you could hold out, that could make me trust my future a second time in a man's hands.'

"She loved her children as I never knew a woman love them before, though she was afraid to show her affection, lest he should find means of punishing her through it; and because I was kind to them, she had a feeling for me—gratitude, friendship, trust—I do not know what to call it—which would have prevented her from making any open breach

between us, even if she had dared to tell her husband of the words I had spoken.

"But she did not dare to tell him. It was cowardly, I make no doubt, not to leave a woman so placed; but except for me she was friendless, helpless, in the hands of a demon, and I could not keep from trying to know how things were with her.

"They grew worse and worse. After his attempt to get General Riley's estate failed, the life he led his wife baffles description, and yet she tried to hide what she suffered from every one, even from me. She wanted him to leave the country; she thought if she could separate him from his bad associates it might be better for the children at any rate, if not for her. I have seen her wringing her hands about the stories which were told and the ballads that were written and sung; and she used to say she hoped it would be all gone and past, all forgotten and put out of men's minds before the children grew up.

"'For if not,' she asked, 'what is to become of them?'

"Then I prayed of her again to leave him. I offered to get her and the children away safely by some means if she would let me arrange it all, and take them where he could never find them.

"That time she did not laugh. She began to tremble all over, and said,—

"'If you were a woman and made me the same offer, I would go this hour; but if I did what you want me, how could I ever look my boys in the face when they grew to be men—how should I teach my girls to be better than their mother had been. I would rather kill myself than do it. Never ask me such a thing again.'

"I went out of the house ashamed, Miss Moffat. I vowed to myself I never would ask her again, and I kept as much away as I could from Maryville, until after that morning when she stole into Kingslough, and, half distracted, tried to tear down the bills with which, as you have no doubt heard, the town was placarded. A man saw and pursued her. I happened to be returning from a bad case which had detained me all night, and she ran right up against me. There was only one thing to do, and I did it. I knocked the fellow down, and as she had fainted carried her into my surgery. When she was better I walked home with her, and from that time began the mischief which has ended as you know.

"So far as I could gather, the man I knocked down bore malice, and took occasion, when he was less than ordinarily sober, to jeer Mr. Brady about there being an understanding between me and his wife. Mr. Brady forbade me to set foot inside Maryville, and I obeyed him until *that* night. Do I weary you?"

"No," Grace answered. "I want to hear all you have to tell me. Some day she may be glad to have a person near her who knows the whole story."

"The evening before, Scott had been with me. He came in the worse for drink, and talked excitedly of the Glendares and Mr. Brady and his own wrongs. He said when Robert Somerford came to be earl, if he ever did, he would not have an acre to call his own; that it had come home to the Glendares as it would come home to Mr. Brady; and then he went on in a maundering sort of way to speak—forgive my mentioning the matter, but it is connected with that which followed—of what a blessing it was you had never after all taken up, as he styled it, with Mr. Somerford. 'Ay, it was a good and honest gentleman the first that asked her, if Miss Grace could have fancied him. There never was a Riley, Tories though they are, would have broken his promise, and brought a poor man to beggary, as Th' Airl has done by me.'

"'But,' he went on, 'Brady did not get Woodbrook from his wife's cousins, and it's like, clever as he thinks himself, he won't have the Castle Farm neither.'

"As the man spoke, it flashed through my mind that it was Mrs. Brady who had revealed her husband's designs on Woodbrook. I lay awake the whole night thinking about it, and then I understood dimly, but certainly, that when she wished to meet you, it was to tell you of his plans, when she wrote to you it was to entreat you to frustrate them."

"You are right," Grace remarked as he stopped for a moment, living, perhaps, the misery of that anxious night over again once more.

"What I suffered thinking about her and her position after that no one can conceive. I knew the man's nature. I had seen him mentally unclothed, and I was certain all she had endured previously at his hands would be nothing as compared with what would follow if once a suspicion of the truth entered his mind. I felt I must see her once again,

and warn her of the danger that menaced. Whatever they might have been before, my feelings then were unselfish. You believe me, Miss Moffat?"

"I do, but pray go on."

"I knew he intended to go to Dublin the next day, and I saw him take the coach at Kilcurragh, where I made it my business to be. When I returned home, Scott had been round to say Reuben was worse, and so, putting some medicine for the lad in my pocket and Scott's stick, which he had left in my room the previous evening, in my hand, I started for the Castle Farm, taking Maryville on my way. I did not want any one at the latter place to know of my visit. Mr. Brady had put the last insult on his wife, and——"

"I know," Grace interrupted, "we need not talk of that—"

"After making sure there was no one about, I went into the flower-garden, and concealing myself behind some shrubs, looked into the room where she generally sat. You know it, the small apartment adjoining the drawing-room. She was there alone; and when I tapped at the window, seeing who it was she came and undid the fastening for me.

"'I must speak to you,' I said. 'Will you come out, or is it safe for me to speak to you here?'

"'Quite safe,' she answered, moving the candle so that no one from the outside could see me where I sat. 'Now, what is the matter?'

"In a few words I told her what I suspected. She said I had guessed rightly.

"'Are you not afraid,' I asked, 'of what may happen if Mr. Brady ever guesses it also?'

"'No,' she said; 'I do not intend to wait for that.'

"'Do you mean that at last——' I began, scarcely able to believe the evidence of my senses, and in that very moment, when as it seemed all I had wished for was within my grasp, feeling a dull sick wish we had never met, that I had never loved, never tempted her.

"'No, Mr. Hanlon,' she answered; there was a composure and a peace about her I had never seen before; the hard restraint which usually charactized her was gone, and as she stood with the light streaming on her face, there was a hope which never previously shone in them gladdening her eyes. 'No, Mr. Hanlon, I do not mean that, and some day you will be thankful for it. What I mean is this, John Riley has come home. He is in Ireland; I could trust my

life in his hands. He will protect me; he will enable me to get free from my husband, and to keep my children all to myself. If you still wish to serve me, you can see him and repeat what I say; you can tell him all—all you have seen in this house, all you know I have gone through, and bid him find some way of helping me as I found a way of helping him and his.'

"We talked for a little time longer, and then I left her. As I was going she noticed what a heavy stick I carried, and asked with a smile such as had never lighted up her face in my knowledge of it, whether I was afraid of being stopped that I walked about with such a shillelagh.

"I said it belonged to Amos Scott, who had left it at my place the previous night, and that I was going to take it to the Castle Farm.

"'They have fever there,' she remarked.

"'Yes, and a very bad fever too,' I said. "Every word we spoke that night is printed on my heart.

"'Poor people, how they have suffered!' she murmured, in a sort of whisper. 'Ah! they have felt what it is to be in his power as well as I.'

"As I had come through the gardens, I returned by them. It was a quiet beautiful night, and not a sound, not even the flight of a night bird broke the stillness.

"I went by the fields to Scott's house, and had got as far as the gate leading into the orchard, when I heard some one shout 'Halloa!' and a minute after a man came up panting to where I stood.

"It was Brady.

"'I want to have five minutes' talk with you, sir,' he began, when he had recovered his breath a little, 'but not here. Walk on with me a bit down the road, where we shall be out of the way of eaves-dropping.'

"He had been so lately engaged in the same business that the word came naturally to him.

"To cut a long tale short, Miss Moffat, his journey to Dublin had been all a blind. He wanted," he said, "to know if the stories he was told of what went on in his absence were true, and he had returned to learn more than he bargained for.

"He went on for a time more like a madman than anything else; but at last calmed down a little, and said if I would promise him not to deliver Mrs. Brady's message he

would overlook her 'Judasim'—so he styled her attempt to save her friends from ruin.

"This I flatly refused. I told him she had asked me to help her; and, heaven helping me, I would——"

The speaker stopped suddenly—he had been overwrought; he had been like a horse going across country till now; and now there came a double ditch he remembered he ought not to have forgotten.

"Miss Moffat," he slowly recommenced, "after that came something I hesitate to tell you."

"Tell me," she said. "It does not matter that I am young instead of old. If it can help Nettie, it cannot hurt me."

"He bade me take her if she would. He said I had his full leave, and free to rid him of a wife who had been his curse from the day he brought her home—whom he hated—whom he might some day, and that soon, be tempted to kill."

"Yes!" gasped Grace.

"And I said I would rid her of him that hour and that minute; for that I loved, and honoured, and respected her too much to make her name a bye-word and a reproach, and that I would take her straight away from Maryville to her own kith and kin at Woodbrook, where there were two men who would know how to protect a woman's fair fame from a ruffian like himself."

"Yes!" said Grace again breathlessly. The end was at hand.

"I turned to go back to Maryville. I swear to you, Miss Moffat, I should never have quitted the house, leaving her at his mercy, for I knew what she had to expect; but he barred my passage."

"You villain," he said, 'you shall never stir from here alive.'

"He put his hand in his pocket—I knew he went armed—and so I shortened the stick I held, turning it, and struck him over the head with the heavy end.

"I did not try to kill the man, God is my witness of the fact. In my examination I stated the simple truth. A man who meant to do mischief with such a blow could scarcely have dealt it. He dropped down on the instant, and then a horror seized me. I flung away the stick and knelt down beside him, and felt his pulse, and laid his cheek to mine.

"He was dead, and I had killed him. I heard footsteps coming and fled, thinking every moment some one was pur-

suing me. I have felt the same thing ever since. To-night you, Miss Moffat, have realized the ideal—that is, the end of the story I had to tell," he said in a low suppressed voice.

But Grace had something still to ask. "Mr. Hanlon," she began, "what did you mean to do about Amos Scott?"

"I meant to let him stand his trial, and if they found him guilty—confess."

"You are sure of that?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Then I think not, Mr. Hanlon," she said. "As the temptation mastered you so far, it would have mastered you further; and we may all feel very thankful that through Mrs. Brady's illness you have been saved from so fearful an ordeal."

The words might be cruel, but the tone in which they were uttered took all bitterness out of them. It conveyed less a reproach for his cowardly selfishness than a feeling of gratitude that Scott's torture was well-nigh over, without it being necessary for Mr. Hanlon to criminate himself, or Nettie to denounce him. That she would have done so eventually Grace could not doubt; but whether before or after the trial was another question. In any event it was well neither of them had been called upon to save Scott by such extreme measures.

By this time Miss Moffat and her companion had reached the plantations which divided the grounds of Maryville from the Castle Farm.

"Do not come any further," she said pausing. "I would rather you did not."

He attempted no remonstrance, but stood silent before her.

"By eight o'clock to-morrow morning," she said, "the letter I spoke of shall be in your hands."

He did not speak; he made no sign for a moment, then suddenly he broke out wildly,—

"I cannot go; it is useless. You ask more from me than I am able to do."

Utterly astounded; utterly at a loss as to what he meant she remained mute, till suddenly comprehension came to her.

"Surely," she exclaimed, "you cannot be so mad as to imagine Mrs. Brady would ever voluntarily look upon your face again!"

"Forgive me," he entreated humbly. "I was no more

to blame for that outbreak than the patient who shrinks under the surgeon's knife. I know what I have to do, and I will do it. May God bless you for helping me upon my weary way."

He was turning to go without further leave-taking, when she held out her hand.

"Miss Moffat, you forget," he said.

"No, I do not forget," she answered. "Take it as a sign that the old has ended and the new begun."

Stooping down, he pressed his lips upon it; then without uttering a word strode back along the path he had come.

She stood till she could distinguish his figure no longer, and watched him through the darkness drifting out of her life.

When she reached Maryville, she found Dr. Girvan waiting for her.

"I have come to tell you, Miss Moffat," he began, "that I am ashamed of myself, and whatever may come of it, good or harm, I will go to him, we both know about, and say just whatever you bid me."

"Thank you a thousand times over," she answered. "But I have been to him to-night, and he will leave Kingslough to-morrow."

"God be praised," exclaimed the doctor devoutly.

The opportunity was irresistible to Grace.

"I hope you are not premature in your thanksgiving," she said. "His successor may prove as great a thorn in your side as he has done."

"Ah! how can ye!" expostulated the old man, shaking his head reproachfully at her as he left the room.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CONCLUSION.

It was September—the loveliest month of all the year in Ireland. On the hill-sides the ripe corn stood gathered into golden sheaves. In the meadows—whence the small stacks had just been carried, to make the great ricks that caused many an humble farmyard to look full and wealthy—cattle browzed the rich pasture in a very ecstacy of content. Clear

and distinct the summits of the distant mountains could be seen rising to meet the blue cloudless sky. Almost without a ripple, the Atlantic washed gently into sheltered bays, over sandy and pebbly shores. With as easy a flight as that of the sea-birds, the white-sailed vessels in the offing cleft their homeward or outward way; whilst, on the hill-tops, the purple heather and the yellow gorse mingled their colours together, and wild thyme gave forth its perfume in solitudes where there was no passer-by to inhale its fragrance.

On the top of a slight eminence, from which the ground, clad in a robe of emerald green, sloped down to the water's edge, stood a lonely looking house, which commanded a view—so its admirers said—of the Atlantic straight away to Newfoundland,—two thousand miles of ocean without a strip of earth; two thousand miles of water resting quiet and silent, waiting for the stormy weather, when the billows should rise up mountains high, lashing themselves like a lion in his fury, and rushing white crested to devour their prey.

This house had been taken by Mrs. Hartley for the autumn, and to it, by slow stages, Mrs. Brady and Grace Moffat were brought to regain health and strength; the former with pale face, and hair cut close like a boy's; the latter weak as a child, after the mental excitement and bodily fatigue she had gone through.

By the time Mrs. Brady was pronounced out of danger. she had begun to droop; walking about Maryville—so Doctor Girvan said—like one more dead than alive, till Mrs. Hartley came and put a stop to her exertions.

It was marvellous to see the change that energetic lady wrought in the aspect of affairs. Before a fortnight was over she had discovered the house I have mentioned, which the gentleman who owned was glad to let, "in order to have the furniture taken care of," was his way of putting it; she had despatched Marrables, a cook, and her maid to have all in readiness for the arrival of the invalids; she had disposed of Nettie's children by sending them to a lady of limited income, who was "thankful," so she said, "to have it in her power to do anything to oblige dear Mrs. Hartley;" and, finally, she had established herself and party at that precise part of the coast where Doctor Murney stated the air would be most bracing for Miss Moffat.

"Of course," said Mrs. Hartley to Nettie, "It does not matter to you where we go, provided we leave Maryville."

"No," Mrs. Brady answered; and that morning they drove down the gloomy avenue, and away from the gates of that house which had proved so wretched to her. She waved her hand back towards it with a gesture of farewell.

"Good-bye, Maryville," she said; "I may see you in my dreams, but never again with my waking eyes, I trust."

They had been but a few days in their new abode. Nettie, seated near one of the windows, was looking out over the sea; Mrs. Hartley was reading the *Times*; Jet, apparently under the impression there was a fire in the grate, monopolized the hearthrug; and Grace was lying on a sofa, wondering when she should be strong enough to bathe, and walk, and climb to the top of one particular headland she could not lift her eyes without seeing.

"I think I should get well at once if I could only lie for a few hours amongst the heather, watching the bees as they hum in and out amongst the thyme," she said at last.

"We will get some of the fishermen to carry you up to the top of the highest hill we can find, in a creel," suggested Mrs. Brady.

"I wish we could hear of a quiet pony she could ride," said Mrs. Hartley, in whose eyes the excursion proposed by Nettie did not find favour.

"I don't think a quiet pony was an animal Gracie ever much appreciated," retorted Mrs. Brady.

"I am very certain it will be a considerable time before she is strong enough to manage an unquiet one," answered Mrs. Hartley.

"You have never told me," said Miss Moffat, turning towards the last speaker, "how you heard I was ill."

"I heard you were ill," said Mrs. Hartley, taking off her eye-glasses and looking over the *Times* at her questioner, "from John Riley. He said if I did not soon come over to Maryville I should hear shortly you were dead. I should have mentioned that fact before, but thought you were probably getting as much tired of hearing Mr. Riley's name mentioned as I was myself."

"I never intend to speak of John again," remarked Nettie. "I thought, Mrs. Hartley, you were his friend; but I am sorry to find I was mistaken."

"My dear," said Mrs. Hartley calmly, "I hope I am Mr Riley's friend, but still I can imagine many things more

interesting and amusing than to hear his virtues recited every hour in the twenty-four."

"But you do not know all, or half! Neither of you know how good he has been to me," exclaimed Nettie.

"If we do not we must be exceedingly dull of apprehension," replied Mrs. Hartley—at which Grace laughed, and remarked if they did not know, it was certainly not for want of being told.

"I never expected anything better from you," said Mrs. Brady, turning quickly towards her; "you never did appreciate John, and it seems as if you never would."

"Well, do not let us lose our tempers about him," entreated Mrs. Hartley, "more particularly as he is coming here next week."

"Is he coming?" asked Grace.

"Yes, to give us what I earnestly hope may prove the conclusion of the Scott romance. It seems to me that since I set foot in Ireland I have heard of nothing but the Scotts, the Glendares, the Rileys, the Hanlons, and the Bradys; interesting people all of them, no doubt, but I confess I like an occasional change of person and incident."

"So do I," said Grace. "Much as I like the Scotts, I shall be very glad when I hear they all are on their way to America."

"As if they could not have gone there as well at first as at last," observed Mrs. Hartley.

"I was willing for them to stay on at the Castle Farm, but Amos would not hear of it," explained Mrs. Brady.

"The moment, in fact, he saw he could go the way he wished without opposition, all desire to do so ceased," remarked Mrs. Hartley.

"Still, I think it very natural he should wish to leave Ireland," said Grace.

"Yes, but would not it have been equally natural for him to wish the same thing eighteen months ago?"

"I cannot see it exactly," said Scott's apologist; and disdaining further argument, Mrs. Hartley resumed her perusal of the *Times*.

From the foregoing conversation it will be inferred, and rightly, that influence had been at work in the Scott and Hanlon affair. The former was already at liberty, the latter beyond the reach of justice; at least, so far away that justice might be excused for not finding him. Nettie had made her

statement, but this was so managed that those parts of the story which might have compromised her were kept in the background, and as no one wished to bring Mr. Hanlon to trial, it was extremely unlikely they would ever be elicited in Court.

To the wretched parents at Hanlon's-Town John Riley had broken the news himself. He had taken all care and trouble off Nettie, and she clung to him in her distress as a child might have done.

To him, nothing in Ireland seemed so unreal as the sight of Nettie in her widow's cap and black gown trimmed heavily with crape to express her mourning for the worst man and the worst husband, as Mr. Riley believed, who ever existed.

About Nettie herself, however, there was no pretence.

"I cannot say I am sorry," she confessed; "I cannot feel sorry. I wish I could, for oh! John, with all my heart and soul I loved him when I was a girl."

"Poor Nettie! poor little woman! I never repented but once making him marry you," he answered, stroking her thin face, "and that has been ever since."

"You did it for the best," she answered, "and in the worst of my trouble I never doubted that."

Why was it, Grace Moffat asked herself, that when she saw the cousins talking confidentially together—saw John carry Nettie in her first convalescence from room to room, her head resting on his shoulder, her arm thrown around his neck in her helpless weakness—a pain went through her heart such as had never struck it before?

"Am I jealous?" she thought, with an uneasy laugh, "jealous of John! Absurd! Am I jealous of seeing another woman prove more attractive than myself?" Yes, my dear Grace, that is what is the matter. You are growing old, and have got lean and ugly, and you cannot bear that your friend should, notwithstanding the troubles she has passed through, keep her good looks whilst you are losing yours. That is the secret of all this dissatisfaction. Time was when you would have laughed such an idea to scorn, in the days

> "When I was young,
> And had suitors, a full score."

Meanwhile Mrs. Hartley looked on, but said nothing; not to Nettie, not to John, not to Grace did she speak on the subject.

Only to Lord Ardmorne did she open her mind.

"I think if we have patience, my lord," she remarked uttering her oracle, "we shall see what we shall see."

At which his lordship smiled with a gravity befitting his station and his political opinions, and said, he "earnestly hoped so."

John Riley came as Mrs. Hartley said he would. He had seen the Scotts off. He went to Liverpool for the purpose. Amos was disturbed in his mind because at the last minute Mr. Moody had informed him there were no long-handled spades to be had in America, and he wished he had taken half-a-dozen out with him.

Mrs. Scott bade Mr. Riley say, if it cost twenty pounds, she would send the first cheese she made in the new country to Miss Grace. They had only one regret—that they could not take Reuben's grave with them.

"When I promised to put up a headstone and have the grass well kept," added Mr. Riley, "they began to cry; but they were tears of happiness, so Mrs. Scott assured me."

Before Mr. Riley left, the quiet pony Mrs. Hartley had wished for was found; and Grace taken by many devious paths to the top of a very high hill, where a throne was made for her amongst the purple heather, and the bees, as if to do her honour, never ceased humming in and out amongst the fragrant thyme.

But it was not there or then, with Nettie flitting round and about them, that John Riley spoke.

He waited till the leaves on the trees encircling Woodbrook had put on their October tints—till Grace was almost strong again—till it had been decided Nettie and her children were to go to England with Mrs. Hartley, and inhabit a cottage portly Mr. Marrables was despatched to inspect and of which he condescended to approve,—waited till the purple had faded from the heather and the Atlantic was beginning its winter wail of woe; then as they walked together by the sea, he said,—

"Lord Ardmorne has shown me how to save Woodbrook. It will require years—energy and hard work—but it may be done. When Mr. Brady found he could not oust out my father, he wrote to Lord Ardmorne who would, he concluded, purchase the estate, offering to tell him, for a share in the profits, how its value might be doubled.

"To this his lordship wrote, declining all communication with him on any subject whatsoever.

"Since Mr. Brady's death, it has been ascertained what this scheme was, and Lord Ardmorne proposes I should take Woodbrook into my own hands, paying my father a sum sufficient to enable him, my mother, and the girls, to live comfortably, and myself carry out Mr. Brady's design. He has also offered me the agency of all his Irish estates, as Mr. Walshe has been given over by the doctors."

"And you will accept the agency and do as he so kindly suggests, of course?" said Grace, wondering why he paused so abruptly.

"It is not of course," he answered; "for the decision rests with you."

"With me," she repeated; "what can I have to do with the matter?"

"Everything," he said. "Grace, once before you refused me, and I went to India; if you refuse me again, I cannot stay in Ireland. With you I could accomplish what I have said—without you success would be worthless. If you say stay, I stay. If you say go, I go; and when once my father dies there will never be a Riley at Woodbrook again."

She hesitated and turned her head away, then with eyes still averted put out her hand timidly and shyly.

"Am I to stay?" he asked, taking it in both of his.

And she whispered "Yes."

"I have heard such a wonderful piece of news" said Mrs. Hartley, as John Riley and Grace entered the house together.

"What is it?" asked the former, thinking it could not be one-half so wonderful as the piece of news he had to tell; but with which, to do the lady's discrimination justice, Mrs. Hartley was already *au fait*.

"Cecil, Earl of Glendare is really married, and Mr. Robert Somerford's chances of succeeding to the title are—*nil*. He is so disgusted at the turn affairs have taken that he has threatened to enlist if his mother and Mr. Dillwyn do not make some suitable provision for him."

"He ought to have gone to work and made a suitable provision for himself years ago," remarked Grace, running upstairs to take off her bonnet.

"She has promised to marry you?" said Mrs. Hartley.

"She has, indeed!"

It was quite true, and yet he felt scarcely able to realize to himself that the waves which once sung so sad a requiem to the hopes of his early manhood, had now murmured an accompaniment to the sweetest melody he ever heard proceed from human lips.

"Yes." That was the beginning and middle and end of the song; but it never ceased to gladden him through all the years that followed. And when John Riley forgets the sweet music he heard where the Atlantic washes that northern shore—the music which has made his life one long continuous harmony—he will have forgotten every sound of earth.

THE END.

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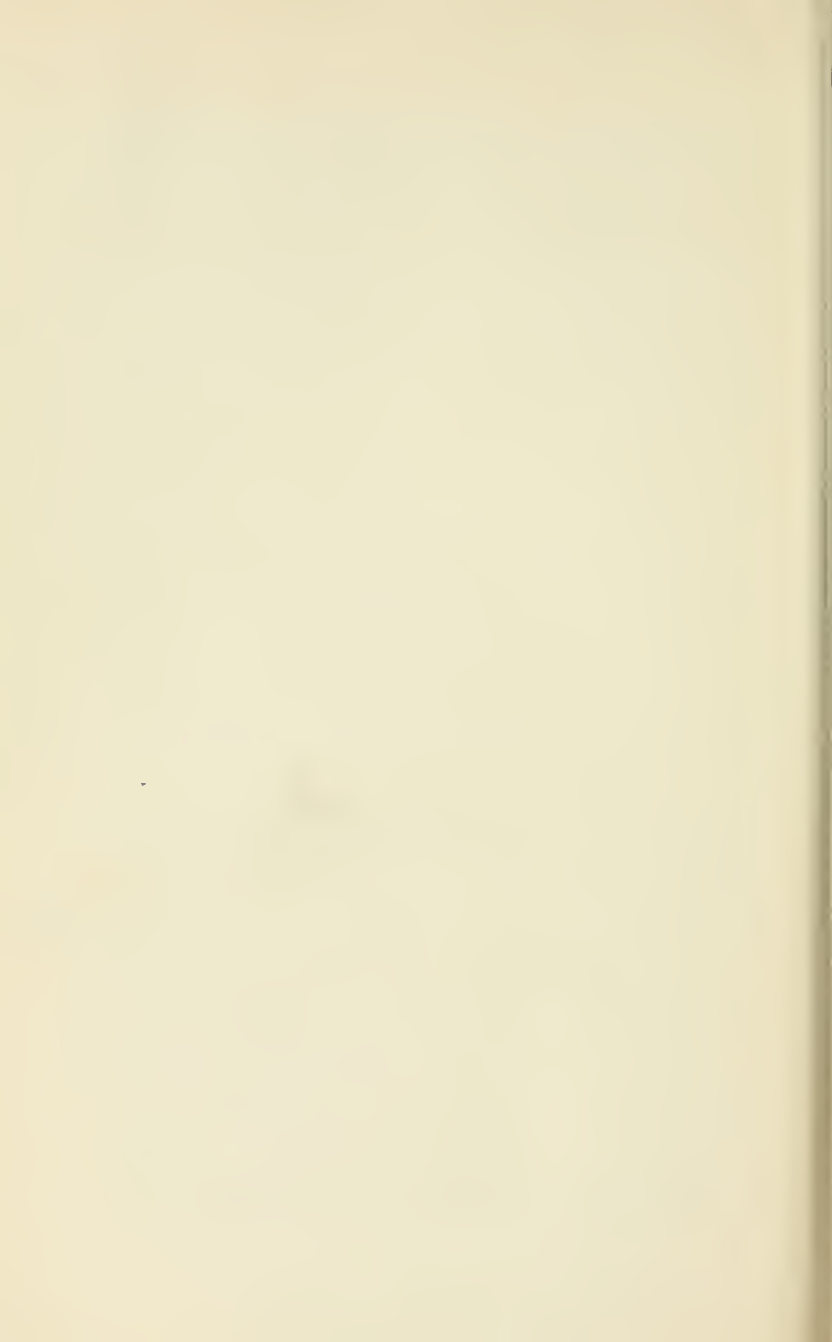

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